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God is love – agape – sacrificial love ... p. 12

"Hey Kids, Say Hi To Dilbert...Ouch!"..... p.16

59th year of publication

The Passion of the Christ: viewing the crucifixion

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Harry der Nederlanden

Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion of the Christ* on the last twelve hours of Jesus' life began making news about a year ago when a group of bishops and the Jewish Anti-defamation League issued critical statements to the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*. They charged that the film would stir up antisemitic feelings and renew charges that the Jews are Christ-killers. On the basis of a purloined script, they issued an 18 page critique of the yet unseen film, and the debate has been hot and heavy ever since. The latest *Newsweek* (Feb. 16) has *The Passion* on the cover: it asks "Who really killed Jesus?" On Feb. 16 Diane Sawyer of ABC devoted a one-hour special to an interview with a quirky, self-conscious Mel Gibson, who made no bones of his commitment to his project as a work of faith.

The film has raised issues on several levels: anti-Semitism, the accuracy of the gospel accounts, the theology of the atonement, the politics of Christian-Jewish relations, art and evangelism, and how the suffering of Christ ought to be represented. The debates surrounding the film are worth examining.

Several Christian groups are making preparations to do follow-up evangelism with people who they anticipate will be introduced to Jesus perhaps for the first time by this film. "Prepare ye for *The Passion*" bugles one recent Christian magazine, sounding as if the crucifixion is to happen all over again.

As a matter of fact, some of the reviews (like the one by Paul Harvey) describe the seeing of the film in terms I've never heard used of a film, and that is saying something, for film reviewers are not known for moderation. Several describe the experience of seeing the film in such graphic, visceral terms, it's as if they had been present at the actual crucifixion.

That is undoubtedly Gibson's intent. He is a traditional Catholic, so it is no surprise that his masterpiece – and there is no doubt in my mind that this is what it is – is sacramental art. Just as in a profound sense the Catholic mass seeks to be a repetition of Christ's sacrifice, so sacramental art seeks to be more than a symbol or commemoration – it aspires to induce a mystical participation in an on-going metaphysical event.

In the polemics of the Reformation about the nature of the Lord's Supper or Mass, there was a sharp polarization on this issue. The Reformers wanted nothing to do with a theology of repetition and participation that required the bodily presence and the reenactment of Christ's sacrifice by a priest. Christ's sacrifice, they insisted was once and for all. He bore the suffering and punishment so that we don't have to. No more blood needs to be shed in payment for sin. To symbolize the theological difference, Protestant churches to this day, feature crucifixes without Christ as opposed to Catholic crucifixes. The "Stations of the cross" are also a typically Catholic spiritual exercise in which especially during Lent the believer seeks to recapture and relive the events leading to Golgotha.

Faithful to the gospels

"It is certainly the most graphic and dramatic portrayal I've ever seen," said Gary Hearon, executive director of Dallas Baptist Association, after an early screening. "I didn't see anything I've not read in Scripture," he added, "but I saw it in a more graphic way because it was portrayed before our very eyes. You see the flesh and blood flying as a result of the scourge.... It's very true to life."

Another, less pious viewer, put it in less complimentary terms. "It is, without a doubt, one of the most violent films ever made," said John Hiscock (*The Telegraph*), "– two hours and six minutes of unremitting, relentlessly graphic brutality.

"However worthy and serious as Gibson's intentions may be, his blood-drenched depiction of the final hours of Jesus's life is both harsh and brutal, dwelling almost entirely on his pain, suffering and torment. Beatings, whippings, floggings and, of course, the crucifixion are all shown in meticulous close-up with frequent slow-motion shots to ensure that no detail, however gory, escapes us."

This accords with every account of the film I have read. Not having seen the film myself, I read some 30 articles by others. Gibson has clearly succeeded in his intent to portray all the violence and suffering involved in Jesus' crucifixion "as it really was." And most affirm Gibson's faithfulness to the gospels.

Although the film is faithful to the facts, clearly it is not faithful to the style of the gospels. These describe Jesus' scourging and crucifixion in fewer words than this article. The question arises – and it is an important one – why don't the gospel writers themselves dwell on the sensational, dramatic events of the crucifixion but tell it as briefly as possible?

Is the answer theological? Our salvation does not hinge on our ability to empathize with and share in Christ's suffering. Their

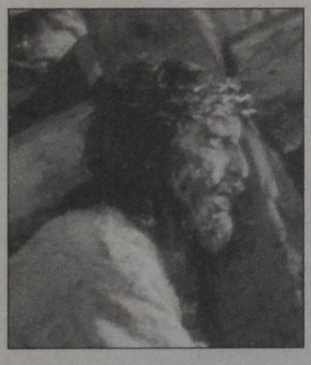
Continued on page 2...

Review

The Passion of the Christ

symbolic, spiritual meaning is more important than a few hours of torture. There are human beings now living who have had to endure tortures much more painful and gruesome than those endured by Jesus, including seeing their children mutilated before their eyes and their wives and daughters raped. We were not saved because Jesus bore some hours of physical torment; we were saved because Jesus bore our sins and the alienation that is the result of sin. That is much more than physical punishment. It is something we cannot begin to comprehend.

Someone who has seen this, Frederica Mathewes-Green writes on the Beliefnet website: "Mel Gibson's *The Passion* promises to be a landmark expression of the strand of devotion that emphasizes identification with Jesus' sufferings. It is a strand that has produced powerfully affecting works of art, and moved and inspired Christians for centuries. The Crucifixion was, in fact, bloody and brutal – Gibson is on solid historical ground in wishing to depict them this way – and when he prayerfully reads the Gospels, no doubt these are the



pictures that appear in his mind.

"But these pictures are not, actually, there in the Gospels. The writers of the Gospels chose to describe Jesus' passion a different way. Instead of appealing to our empathy, they invite us to awesome wonder, because they had a different understanding of the meaning of his suffering."

Blaming the Jews

It is in part because of the graphic, powerful portrayal of Christ's death that many Jewish and other critics have warned that the film will incite some viewers to anti-Semitism. Paula Fredriksen, the author of *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews*, which absolves Jews of complicity in the crucifixion, published a long diatribe against the film in *The New Republic*, pointing out that Gibson did not just rely on the gospels but also on the visionary writings of a medieval nun, Sister Anne Catherine Emmerich, whose purpose is precisely to dwell on Jesus' sufferings moment by moment and who foregrounds the role of the Jews more strongly than do the gospels.

Several Jewish leaders have taken a strong stance against the film, like New York State Assemblyman Dov Hikind, who sees the film as anti-Jewish. "This film can potentially lead to violence directed against the Jewish community," Hikind asserted. "It will result in anti-Semitism and bigotry. It really takes us back to the Dark Ages ... the Inquisition, the Crusades, all for the so-called sin of the crucifixion of Jesus."

The Canadian Jewish Congress is more tactful. It issued a statement that acknowledges that Christians who have seen the movie say it does not arouse anti-Semitic feelings. It goes on to suggest, however, that the film – and by extension the New Testament – is inaccurate in its depiction of the role of the Sanhedrin in Jesus' trial. In other words, it argues that the Jews of Jesus' day were not responsible but that it was the work of the Romans.

A debate for an exclusively Jewish audience in Manhattan – involving traditional and messianic Jews (Christian converts) – drew one thousand people. Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, an Oxford-educated scholar, said, "It was the Romans and solely the Romans that put Jesus to death. It was the Christians who crucified Christ." He appealed to Christians everywhere to oppose Mr. Gibson's film, which he believes to be "scandalous and defamatory."

Abraham Foxman, the National Director of the Anti-Defamation League, complained that the film "unambiguously portrays Jewish authorities and the Jewish mob as the ones responsible for the decision to crucify Jesus."

"The problem with the tone of his statement," wrote Steven Waldman in Slate, "is that, as best we can tell, Jews did kill Jesus. Or, more precisely, according to the four gospels, Jews prodded the Romans into doing it. Mr. Foxman might as well have said that *The Passion* "unambiguously portrays Jewish authorities and the Jewish mob just like the Bible does."

"To say that films should not be made depicting an important Jewish role in the death of Jesus," concludes Waldman, "is to say that films should not be made based on the Bible. The idea that influential Jews wanted Jesus killed is not a distortion of Christianity; it is, for better or worse, an accurate depiction of the New Testament."

Conservative Catholic John McCloskey notes, "If you find the Scriptures anti-Semitic, you'll find this film anti-Semitic."

David Klinghoffer, writing as a Jew to fellow Jews, after pointing out that the film is faithful to the gospels, asks, "If we are empowered to edit their doctrine, then why are they not empowered to edit ours?"

He goes on to assure his fellow Jews that if Christians are not being aroused to hatred by reading the gospels, it is doubtful that Gibson's film will do so.

Gibson's hand

On the issue of who's to blame for Christ's death, the Jews or the Romans, Charles Colson writes: "It was both and neither. The Jews didn't cause the death of Jesus, nor did the Romans. They were merely instruments carrying out what God had decreed. He sent his only begotten Son to die on the cross so that the sins of mankind might be forgiven. And those who take Scripture seriously have always known who killed Jesus: You and I and all other sinful human beings did so.

"Mel Gibson understands this. In his movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, the hand holding the spike being nailed through Christ's wrist is Gibson's.

"Who killed Jesus? Mel Gibson knows. And he made the very point with his own hand that *he* was responsible, not the Jews.

"Similarly the Dutch painter, Rembrandt painted *The Raising of the Cross* as a self-portrait. As Christ hangs on the cross while it is being lifted into place, the soldier pulling it up is Rembrandt. Who killed Jesus? Rembrandt knew. *He* did.

"And I did. And you did. We're the ones who sent Jesus to the cross loaded down with our sins."

I add here, too, the words of the Catholic intellectual, Michael Novak: "On the cross, the Christ of Gibson's movie is offering forgiveness, reconciliation, and unity. To blame his suffering on others' sins, instead of one's own, would be to join the boisterous soldiers who inflicted on him all the pain that viewers will hardly be able to watch. If Christians blamed others, they would again make a mockery of Christ. They would again pound the crown of thorns into his skull."

The higher critics

Paula Frederiksen and several other biblical scholars like Dominic Crossan (the sort that *Time* and *Newsweek* always interview as the real experts) tackle the biblical texts themselves as tainted. They are not really eyewitness accounts telling us "how it really happened," they argue, but were written much later when the young church had an axe to grind with the Jews and therefore slanted the story to lay the responsibility on them rather than on the Roman authorities.

Crossan, in an online debate, goes on not just to attack the gospel account but also the theology of the atonement that holds to the view that God's forgiveness and mercy can be won only by having Christ suffer the excruciating anguish of the cross in our stead.

So Gibson's Passion has aroused debate on several levels – about the theological style of the film, about its purported anti-Semitism, about the nature of the gospels, and about the theology of the atonement.

The antithesis

David Elcott, in an article titled, "Gibson's polarizing *Passion*," adds a secular humanist concern. He complains that (like *The Lord of the Rings*) Gibson's film portrays the world too much in terms of black and white. It pits "Jesus and his immediate followers against everyone else, perfect goodness against satanic evil.

"In so doing," he argues that Gibson's film subverts "the core values of democratic pluralism and mutual religious respect that undergird our country."

He relates that in the screening he attended Gibson afterward contrasted the portrayal of Jesus as a great teacher or moral leader with that of Jesus as Savior. This divides the world in terms of "those who believe and those who deny. The opponents of Jesus are dupes of Satan, Gibson said."

In other words, Elcott, director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee, is concerned that the biblical notion of the antithesis depicted in the film is contrary to democratic values like tolerance and community.

Martin Marty, the dean of American theologians, comments: "Inside America, the virtues of pluralism, tolerance, good will, and interfaith neighborliness generally rule, and that's all to the good. But interfaith amity cannot mean that the stories get blended."

The expression of deep differences should be possible, contends Marty, without calling forth cries of protest from other communities.

An evangelistic tool

Rev. Wayne Pederson, President of Mission America Coalition, said the movie could become one of the most powerful evangelistic tools in the marketplace.

"*The Passion* effectively and powerfully tells the story of the great price paid by the Son of God for our disobedience," said Pederson. "Followers of Jesus should invite their friends and colleagues to view the film; then talk with them about what Jesus did for us so that we could live forever."

After seeing the film, Billy Graham said, "I have often wondered what it must have been like to be a bystander during those last hours before Jesus' death. After watching *The Passion of the Christ*, I feel as if I have actually

see ***The passion*** *page 3...*

News

The sponsorship scandal: how far does the corruption go?

Harry der Nederlanden

The trust of the people, Dwight D. Eisenhower once said, is one of the most precious resources that a democratic government has. And it squanders it at its peril. Without trust between the people and its elected leaders, democratic government cannot function, for elections would not mean anything.

The recently aired scandal over the sponsorship rip-offs have sent public trust plummeting to new lows. The most immediate impact falls on the Liberal party, as the media endlessly inform us with its endless polls. The reactions of the public to the hoopla about the scandal quickly becomes bigger news than the facts themselves. And the opposition, of course, is eager to magnify the charges of corruption and to make the mud stick to Paul Martin and the Liberal party.

The media are no less eager to sensationalize, many reporters calling it the biggest scandal since the Hudson's Bay Company stole most of the country from the aboriginals.

While it is important to expose the mismanagement and outright fraud committed by politicians, public servants and businessmen, it is no less important that we do not undermine the trust of Canadians any more than necessary.

A poll taken after Chretien fired Art Eggleton as defense minister for a much smaller misdemeanor revealed that almost 70 percent of Canadians believed that the government was rife with corruption at all levels. At the time, Chretien had responded to the exposé by saying, "These things happen." By this he did not mean to say that this happens all the time; he meant to say that once in a while in an institution that employs millions there's someone who goes astray. When he learned that the public was saying, "These things happen – routinely," he was rightly upset.

Paul Martin and his government are saying that Fraser's report on the sponsorship fiasco says that it involves a small group within the Department of Public Works that managed to skim off $100 million under the blind eye of Alfonso Gagliano. Critics suggest that the scam can hardly have gone undetected by senior officials of the Crown corporations and leaders in the Liberal party. The latter is supported by a letter addressed to Martin about two years ago informing him that there was a lot of scuttlebut in party circles concerning the misuse of the sponsorship funds.

The big question being discussed on talk radio the week after the Fraser report was, 'How much did Martin know and when did he know it?' If it is true, as he claims, that he knew almost nothing, should he in his role as finance minister have known more?

Martin claims that he was left out of the loop by Chretien and he is seeking to divert blame away from his government to Chretien's administration. This strategy may backfire, say some pundits, for the infamy still falls on the Liberal party, and at last report Martin was still a Liberal.

Endemic corruption

Veteran commentators like Richard Gwyn of the Star and Robert Fulford of the National Post speak of a systemic, endemic corruption – primarily in the federal government's relation to Quebec. It's a political culture that has plagued both Progressive Conservative and Liberal governments of Canada. Successive governments have tried to buy Quebec's loyalty with infusions of cash. "The system is biased toward corruption," writes Gwyn. "Buy votes – for national unity, and also for the party."

Chretien said as much in the early days of the scandal: what's a few million dollars if it keeps Quebec within Canada? A sloppy attitude that leaves room for corruption to take root. If about two-fifths of the money was diverted from its purpose, it did little to instill trust and loyalty. On the contrary, it breeds cynicism over toward government.

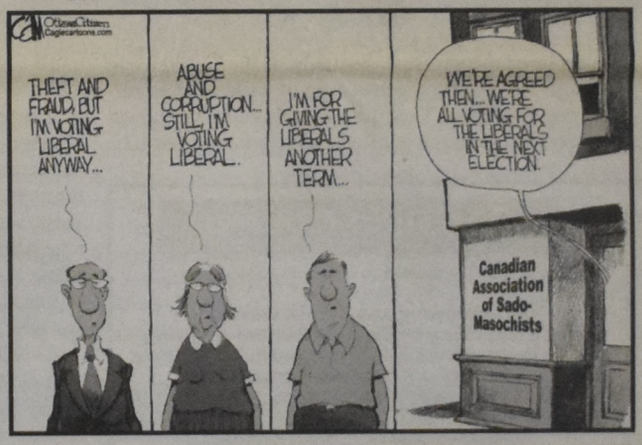
But we all know that neither Chretien nor Martin are in favor of corruption; in fact, Chretien came into office after the scandals of the Mulroney era promising to clean up government and make it more transparent. Martin said much the same thing. Both know that cynicism hurts not just Canadian democracy but the Liberal party as well, for cynicism destroys all idealism, and without a measure of that you don't have a liberal party – small 'l' or big 'L.'

In perspective

To put the sponsorship scandal in perspective: we are angry about the corruption because it has been exposed – by our government. That would not have happened in many other countries of the world. It proves that it is not endemic in the sense that it is a routine part of our politics the way it is in many countries in Africa and South America. Our politicians are not as a class any more corrupt than the rest of us. The Liberals may have become too sloppy and complacent after so many years in office, and as a Dutch saying has it: It's opportunity that makes a thief. However, failure to closely police the spending of public monies may be culpable but it is not criminal, it may be carelessness but it is not corruption.

Meanwhile, as citizens we do well to commend Martin for his promise to get to the root of the sponsorship abuses and for the mechanisms he has already put in place to do so. And we must hold him to it – and also hold him to his promise to make government more transparent.

One hundred million bucks, after all, is not chicken feed; it is an expression of the public's resolve to do something for the common good. And that ought not to be devalued. We entrust that power for good to our representatives, and that is a trust we – citizens, politicians, and journalists – must not squander.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THEFT AND FRAUD, BUT I'M VOTING LIBERAL ANYWAY...
ABUSE AND CORRUPTION... STILL, I'M VOTING LIBERAL.
I'M FOR GIVING THE LIBERALS ANOTHER TERM...
WE'RE AGREED THEN... WE'RE ALL VOTING FOR THE LIBERALS IN THE NEXT ELECTION.
Canadian Association of Sado-Masochists

The passion *...continued from p.2*

been there. I was moved to tears. I doubt if there has ever been a more graphic and moving presentation of Jesus' death and resurrection – which Christians believe are the most important events in human history.

"The film is faithful to the Bible's teaching that we are all responsible for Jesus' death, because we have all sinned," Mr. Graham continued. "It is our sins that caused his death, not any particular group. No one who views this film's compelling imagery will ever be the same."

The testimony of Graham and others who have seen the film leave no doubt that Gibson's film is a masterpiece that deeply moves Christians to awareness of what Christ had to bear to pay for their iniquities. "By his stripes we are healed," Gibson stressed in his interview with Diane Sawyer. Whether non-Christians will come away with the same impression depends a lot on how the Christian community contextualizes their experience.

"I will never be the same"

I end with an excerpt from Paul Harvey, the famous news commentator, who describes his experience of watching Gibson's film:

"The film was very briefly introduced, without fanfare, and then the room darkened. From the gripping opening scene in the Garden of Gethsemane, to the very human and tender portrayal of the earthly ministry of Jesus, through the betrayal, the arrest, the scourging, the way of the Cross, the encounter with the thieves, the surrender on the Cross, until the final scene in the empty tomb, this was not simply a movie; it was an encounter, unlike anything I have ever experienced.

"In addition to being a masterpiece of film-making and an artistic triumph, *The Passion* evoked more deep reflection, sorrow and emotional reaction within me than anything since my wedding, my ordination or the birth of my children. Frankly, I will never be the same.

"When the film concluded, this 'invitation only' gathering of 'movers and shakers' in Washington, DC were shaking indeed, but this time from sobbing. I am not sure there was a dry eye in the place. The crowd that had been glad-handing before the film was now eerily silent. No one could speak because words were woefully inadequate. We had experienced a kind of art that is a rarity in life, the kind that makes heaven touch earth."

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Editorial

Musings amid the sound of clashing civilizations and culture wars

Harry der Nederlanden

There's a theme that connects several of the stories, not one we set out to develop, but one that keeps emerging in the news in various ways. The theme is tolerance. Tolerance is a key value in a world and in a society whose very existence depends upon finding a way for people with different, conflicting beliefs and ways of life to live together in peace.

Every community or group requires tolerance of some sort to remain unified, for we are all different in some way and often hold contrary opinions. The Christian Reformed Church of the 1950's would have looked very homogeneous to an outsider, but a couple of decades later the boundaries of that community were being redrawn and some felt obliged not to go along.

Recently the Supreme Court of Canada had to consider the issue of spanking: can the use of corporal punishment by a parent on a child be tolerated in a society that is seeking to eliminate violence? A proponent of radical vegetarianism (vegan) recently declared that any parent who feeds his child as much as a slice of bacon is guilty of child abuse. Once when I took my youngest daughter to the doctor when she was still a pre-schooler, I told the doctor that our older daughter had once pushed a peanut up her nose. She fixed me with a stern look and declared, "That's child abuse!" When I sputtered a protest, she told me firmly, "Any parent who leaves peanuts around for a 4-year-old to stick up her nose is being negligent."

Some folks have no difficulty finding ways to have parents declared incompetent, no doubt so the children can be put in the more competent care of child welfare services and foster care. They draw a circle with a very small diameter, and although our four children turned out to be surprisingly well-balanced adults, I find myself excluded from the circle of competent parents. All my children have had their knuckles rapped, been fed bacon and been exposed to peanuts. Thus far, our society can tolerate parents who expose their kids to bacon and peanuts, but the authorities are not so sure about the spankers.

The limits of tolerance

Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ* raised for some critics the spectre of anti-Semitism. Having created a society in which ancient hostilities over toward the Jews have been largely eliminated, can we permit the showing of a film that might kindle those primal hatreds once again? No, said some guardians of tolerance, and they launched an attempt to prevent the production and the showing of the film.

A Christian teacher in BC expresses his orthodox views regarding homosexual behavior in a local paper and suddenly finds himself disciplined by the association that accredits teachers. His Christian morality clashes with the inclusive secular morality of Canadian society (as interpreted by the courts). If he wants to teach in the public school system, he must suppress his personal convictions.

In every issue the church pages of CC carry news about Christian brothers and sisters living in Islamic, Hindu and Buddhist societies who are under constant pressure to conform their beliefs and their lives with those of the dominant religion and culture. To the militant defenders of those cultures, the presence of a Christian community in their midst is an offense and a threat.

Alongside these stories, there are other stories that speak of openness and acceptance – the column by Peter Schuurman which attempts to see ourselves through Muslim eyes, the article about Barbara Carvill, which speaks about welcoming the stranger in our midst, the feature article by Remkes Kooistra, which is a paean of praise to agape, sacrificial love, the ultimate basis of the very deepest community, our union with God's will-to-community that we call the Kingdom of heaven.

As followers of the Christ, who came to reconcile us with God and make us at-one with him, whom God declared the new head of the human race instead of Adam, who unites all peoples into his fellowship and who is the unifying force of the cosmos itself, we Christians are heavily invested in unity and community. The word "all" reverberates throughout the New Testament, for the Lord who has ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God is Lord of all.

The circle of community

Throughout history peoples have assumed that they themselves and their culture are the centre of the circle that defines what is truly human. The Jews saw themselves as the chosen people of God on the basis of their descent from Abraham, who heeded the call of Jahweh and separated himself from the heathen nations. The ancient Greeks, one of the primary springs of Western civilization, referred to all non-Greeks as barbarians. Various native tribes in the Americas referred to themselves as "The People," implying that others were of a lesser stature. The Romans simply assumed that all the peoples they gathered into their empire through conquest would benefit from Roman rule – the pax Romana. Similarly, the conquering armies of Islam saw themselves as the agents of the establishment of the law of Allah, shariah, for the benefit and peace of all mankind.

In this day of the so-called "culture wars" going on within our society and the so-called "clash of civilizations" occurring on a global level, we are constantly being forced to question our assumptions about the values that constitute the basis of our unity and our communities. Fewer and fewer of those values seem sure, permanent. While a previous generation laid down their lives to defend democracy and freedom over against totalitarian ideologies, many social critics now worry that few of us in the West are willing to put ourselves on the line for any constellation of values whatsoever. To do so is to invite the label of fundamentalist.

Many postmodernists suggest that all ideals and values are nothing more than an attempt by those in power to write their values – the ones that uphold their privileges – on the heavens.

Christians are still among the most enthusiastic, committed defenders of "traditional" values within Western society and of Western civilization over against the threat of Islam and others. They cannot do so, however, without a great degree of ambiguity. Their source of unity and community, they know, is not located in any core set of values or in a certain way of life or in a certain race or language or in a certain kind of political order or economic arrangement.

Scripture and history, as guided by our providential God, lead us to a point in time where three civilizations intersect – the Jewish, the Greek and the Roman. Each stands for a different source of order and community – three streams that have fed what we call Western civilization. All three for different reasons reject the true source of unity and peace that comes into the world in Jesus Christ. We are among the crucifiers, as Mel Gibson recognizes, but also among the crucifiers are the personified values of the three sources of our civilization and culture.

Christians are put under another Lord, another kind of order that cannot be reduced to Us vs Them, the civilized vs the barbarians. Nor can this be reduced to the difference between power and love, or between pacifism and the sword. But the Christian faith does defer ultimate authority and power to God alone, so that no man and no government may claim the right to rule the hearts of men and women. Only God can demand ultimate allegiance, and he rules first of all by his Spirit to inspire lives lived by the law of love, by agape.

That's a simple principle to say, but it has taken Christians generations and centuries, reformation upon reformation, to work out the implications of that simple principle in their personal lives, in their relationship to culture, in their churches and in their politics. And our education in the ways of the Lord is far from finished. We need to be constantly alert and willing to learn more.

But that doesn't mean we haven't learned some things worth hanging onto and defending.

Toleration and freedom of conscience are two things that Western culture has learned from its encounter with Christianity and that Christians have learned in the context of Western culture. They are worth contending for in the public square and on the global level against both a defensive secularism and a militant Islam. But if we forget that the primary battle is not on the level of missiles and tanks, multinationals and technology, but for the hearts of the people who walk in darkness – to awaken in them the awesome wonder that God is not against us but for us, that his very essence is love – then we have lost the culture war in our own hearts.

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Letters

Restorative Justice: some comments

CRC synod 2003 responded to a study report on restorative justice by Classis BC North-West, quite favorably. However, synod suggested that it had several weaknesses, notably that its focus was primarily on Canada, that its biblical foundations were not strong enough, and that it lacked sufficient concrete suggestions. Therefore, it recommended another study committee.

There may, indeed, be some merit in a second view. Even well-intentioned ideas have sometimes a negative effect, as the following example exemplifies.

Solitary confinement

The 18th century in Britain was a time of much turmoil about the penal system. New types of prisons were constructed and many people clamored for prison reform. Among the latter were Quakers. One of them, Elizabeth Fry, is still a familiar name in Canada, but now the name applies to an organization advocating prison reform for women.

In 1984, I spent several weeks doing research at Friends' House library in London, England. One Sunday (First Day, in Quaker terminology) I decided to attend a service in the room next to the library. I was not sure what to expect, although I knew that frequently much time was spent in meditation. At 11:00 it was announced that the service started and exactly an hour later the same person announced that the service was over. During that time not a word was spoken.

At other services it could happen that someone felt inclined to speak and I must admit that I was waiting for this to happen. This meditation, guided by the Inner Light, played an important role in early prison reform. For Quakers this quiet time was an opportunity to approach God, and thus they initially supported John Howard's suggestion of solitary confinement. It gave prisoners the opportunity, they felt, to think about their flawed existence.

Although these early Quaker prison reformers soon came to realize that there were psychological drawbacks to solitary confinement – Elizabeth Fry, for instance, protested against it, recognizing that it could cause nervousness – they still thought it highly valuable if managed properly.

However, by World War I solitary confinement had become a form of punishment reserved primarily for conscientious objectors. For some it was such a hellish experience that it resulted in insanity.

Nevertheless, some Quakers regarded the experience positively. For instance, the thirty-five-year old Malcolm Sparkes wrote in 1917, after about three months in prison, that he had "practically no moments of depression but very many of tremendous joy." In fact, he regarded his prison as a "spiritual university ... a spiritual power house, in which a veritable Niagara of energy is being created and pent up, until it can be liberated for the service of God and humanity." Another wrote that he had "converted prison into a monastery, a home whereby I can meditate upon Him."

In spite of these positive experiences, this well-meant early prison reform had become draconian. It reminded me of Paul's comment in Romans 7: 14-20, that the good he intended he did not do. Solitary confinement was not properly managed.

What if restorative justice is not managed properly either?

While this warning should not deter us, we need to be very careful when reforming the penal system. What I found missing in the report was a good summary of the history of the present system. So many Christians seem to think that this system "has always existed," while in fact it is barely a few centuries old.

And quite a few seem to wonder if reform is necessary, even arguing that the judgments are often far too lenient. They may think that the recent overture to synod is another attempt at leniency. It seems to me that the first item of proper management is to educate the people. Without broad support restorative justice could be a contentious issue.

In order to get this broad support, the new report should have two aspects backing its arguments: a good biblical foundation and an appeal to the non-Christian community.

The Bible frequently refers to God as a God of justice and it is therefore not a surprise that so many appeal to this aspect. But the human being, created in God's image, is also expected to be just, as Micah 6:8 makes clear.

The English word "justice" is derived from the Latin *justitia*, which for the Romans had largely a legal connotation. It implied legal relationships and sanctions forming the foundation of law and which were at the same time secured by law.

The report does not make very clear that this Latin term has become a foundational term of western civilization. What the new report should do is to contrast the biblical understanding with the Roman concept. Not that the Roman concept is wrong, but it should not supersede the biblical connotations. Restorative justice is rooted in shalom, not in Roman legalism.

I suggest that there should also be a thorough discussion of the notion of reconciliation.... While a crime is ultimately an offence against God, it is in the human sphere that we have to deal with it. Although God had Moses appoint judges for Israel, the biblical concepts make it reasonably clear that a crime is in the first place a personal and not a state matter. It seems to me that legislators – and many other people as well – seem to reverse that, using treason, one of the few cases against the state, as their

See ***Restorative Justice*** *page 6...*

Remembering the Women

I was so delighted to see the Building Trust column on Remembering the Women. (I just happened to pick up the latest copy of *Christian Courier* while at CRC Board of Publication meetings in Grand Rapids last week.)

Several years ago, aware that more mothers were known than the few in Matthew's genealogy, I began looking and charting them as I discovered more names.

I've often wished someone would write about that but have never seen such a collection of their names as Ann Patrick Ware has put together so beautifully! I'm always annoyed when people refer to 'the women in Christ's genealogy' as if the few listed in Matthew were the only mothers known – or as if the others, being unnamed, did not exist or were not worth mentioning!

I have long been interested in the contributions to the line of Christ via the mothers. We have that rather direct line from Adam to Christ by way of the fathers, but into that line the mothers wove such rich diversity – reaching back and enfolding many many family lines. If I were an artist I'd show the father's genealogy in one long straight black or crimson line and surround it with a vast overlapping and intermingled array of tiny pink/blue 'V's indicating the men and women brought into Christ's lineage through the mothers and their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents etc.

There are many women in Scripture whose stories or connections I've never heard celebrated. One day I want to find the time to write of them.

Thank you for the Building Trust column. I will be sharing it with "New Wineskins" – a group of women who share my interest in these things. I've already ordered "Remembering the Women" and its companion prayer book.

JoMae Spoelhof, Rochester, NY

Immigrants

Regarding Christian Reformed immigrants by John Hofstee (CC, Feb. 2):

As an immigrant from Holland myself (1952), it was so good to read John Hofstee's review of Agnes Amelink's articles in *Trouw*.

In his final paragraph he reacts to Amelink's statement that "there was a missionary goal, that the immigrants saw it as an opportunity to spread the gospel and establish churches." We all know that the primary motives of immigrants had to do with seeking better economic opportunities for their sons and daughters. Nothing wrong with that. That economic struggle took almost all the energy the imigrants had. In light of that it is all the more remarkable that a large number of churches were started in a few years. Remarkable, too, was the determination of the leaders for us to become English-speaking, so we could reach Canadian society. Christian schools were next. In many ways we were blest by leaders (some American, many Dutch pastors), who wanted to spread Christian influence in every area of life. That story – which is my own story, too – must be written up, and not forgotten.

William Vander Beek, Langley, B.C.

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Society

On Location

Theresa Miedema

Citizenship in a globalized society

The Global Village. This is my new address. I am a citizen in a world that is increasingly interconnected in all senses. Politically, economically, socially: what happens in one part of the world affects my life here in Toronto. An earthquake in Asia may affect the value of my investment portfolio. A terrorist threat in the US affects my travel plans, and causes my own government to react by promising to increase defence spending at home so that we can send troops overseas, leaving less money for health care and education. A woman at a family reunion in Hong Kong shares an elevator with a sick doctor and returns home to Toronto with SARS.

But interconnection is just part of the story. Globalization is the trend that has captured our imagination and concern. Globalization is a complex trend about which many books have already been written. I want to address one aspect of globalization: the proliferation of big corporations around the world and the implications that this has for our neighborhood.

The forces underlying globalization and the interconnectedness of the world are far too strong to overcome.

Big Business is riding the wave of globalization and laughing all the way to the bank. Cheap labor markets are becoming more and more accessible and open for exploitation. Better yet, countries are opening up their doors to Big Business and bidding them come in. Apparently masses of people around the world have been waiting their entire lives for a Big Mac and a Coke, and Big Business is determined to give them the food and drink of the West. Of course, with the food and drink, Big Business is also exporting Big Business values: profits, individualism, consumerism, materialism.

Folks in the Global Village are becoming concerned about the power of Big Business in the neighborhood. We've called Neighborhood Watch meetings to discuss our concerns. Big Business is setting government policies and has too much influence over politics around the globe. Big Business exploits the poor and the vulnerable. Big Business is spreading Western values and destroying local cultures. Big Business answers only to the bottom line: profit. Big Business is not accountable. Big Business exercises far too much power and is eroding the fabric of democracy around the world.

Occasionally, I feel as though I have entered a barnyard full of Chicken Littles who are all crying, "The sky is falling! The sky is falling!" Good neighbors, I have good news: the sky is not falling; it is merely changing. We need not panic, although we must consider thoughtfully how to navigate the changes marking our landscape.

The solution is not to try to shut the doors on the forces of globalization. The forces underlying globalization and the intercon-nectedness of our world are far too strong to overcome. It is not possible to paddle against this current. We must begin by understanding that our dialogue is no longer about whether globalization should happen or whether it is good or bad. Globalization has happened and it will not go away. It is, in and of itself, neither good nor bad. The moral quality of globalization depends, like so many things in our lives, on how we use it.

We ought not to think that we are powerless in a globalized society. Nothing could be farther from the truth. If Big Business does in fact play a large role in determining the rules and policies of the Global Village, then we are all citizens with voting rights. Indeed, each time Big Business offers its products and services, it is holding a referendum and we each have the capacity to make our views known.

Big Business answers to the bottom line, and the bottom line is only able to grow with our cooperation. We hold the ultimate tool of accountability for Big Business: our purchasing power. If we are not willing to purchase from a company, it will die, along with whatever values, policies and practices that company endorsed.

Making a purchase is not merely about acquiring goods and services. It is a tacit endorsement of the practices and policies of the company that is providing those goods and services. Each time we make a purchase, we effectively vote for the policies and practices adopted by the providers of our purchase and actively support their continued existence.

This is both empowering and sobering. As consumers, we wield significant power in the Global Village. But with power comes responsibility. Purchasing a running shoe is no longer about the best fit. It must also be about the individuals who made that shoe. Are we responsible for the woman or child who stitched up the eyelets on our running shoes? Let me rephrase the question: who is my neighbor?

"On Location" is a column written by Theresa Miedema about current events, ideas and trends in society.

Post-abortion trauma

Lynn Marie-Ittner Klammer

The words post-traumatic stress disorder (P-TSD) conjure up visions of shell-shocked war veterans struggling with the memories of their past war experiences. However, P-TSD impacts the lives of a variety of individuals.

Any traumatic experience can lay the groundwork for P-TSD. Sexual assault, earthquakes, floods and car accidents are all examples of the types of traumatic events that have commonly been seen as instigators for P-TSD.

In recent years however, an increasing number of post-abortion women have also been added to that list, coining a new phrase — Post-Abortion Trauma. While it's important to note that not all women who have an abortion will suffer from it, some do, and therefore, as responsible caregivers, we must be aware of its symptoms.

The effects of Post-Abortion Trauma may become evident in as little as 6 months after the abortion has been performed or many years later.

Janet experienced Post-Abortion Trauma 4 years following her traumatic experience. She was 15 years old when she had an abortion.

Now at 19, she knows what Post-Abortion Trauma is like. She suffers from recurrent flashbacks. These vivid recollections can happen during waking hours and are certainly terrifying.

"It was like it was happening all over again," Janet says. "I was so scared. I could see the pattern on the floor and smell the smell of the clinic. It was just like I was there and it was happening again just like it did before. At night even the dreams were bad. I guess I just couldn't get it out of my head."

It has been 6 years since Carol had her abortion. At age 25, she is experiencing deep depression. "I can't eat or sleep. I just feel like crying all the time, but I can't even do that. I just can't get the abortion out of my mind."

Whether it has been 20 years since the traumatic experience or only 2 years, the symptoms of P-TSD can be terrifying and debilitating.

Some common symptoms include:

- recurrent memories
- nightmares and other sleep disturbances
- reliving the experience (flashbacks, hallucinations, etc.) or a "feeling" that the event is recurring
- intense distress when exposed to events or reminders of the original trauma
- avoidance of thoughts, feelings and activities related to the trauma
- symptoms of depression
- feeling estranged from others
- inability to recall aspects of the trauma
- difficulty concentrating
- hypervigilance

These are just some of the symptoms of P-TSD, but not all. If you need help determining if you are suffering from P-TSD, consult a professional.

Lynn Marie-Ittner Klammer is a therapist and freelance writer who has often contributed to CC.

...***Restorative Justice*** *continued from page 5*

model. But that model is hopelessly inadequate and restorative justice attempts to break through this inadequacy.

It is somewhat ironic that so many evangelical Canadians support political parties that want to diminish the power of the state yet favor severer penalties for criminals based on a non-biblical perspective. They give enormous power to the state in this area, without much justification. Again, this may not be a surprise. Historically conservatives have always favored harsher punishments than liberals.

The task of the new committee is tremendous, even though the groundwork has already been laid. Earlier I suggested that the committee should also present a case to the non-Christian community. I want to mention only one instance. In the middle ages some laws mentioned that eyes should be put out or a hand be amputated or lips be cut off (punishments differentiated between men and women), punishments not so different from Islamic sharia laws. The western world has moved away from these kinds of punishments, not only because they were regarded as cruel but also as counterproductive.

Many punishments still seem to be cruel and counterproductive and the committee could refer to these aspects in their appeal to the non-Christian community.

But this task should not be left to this committee alone. Publications should discuss this topic regularly. Over the past few years *Christian Courier* has published several articles, notably those by Rev. John de Vries. That is a promising start. *The Banner* could deal much more extensively with synodical reports over a longer period of time and not just before synod convenes. Ministers could preach about it.

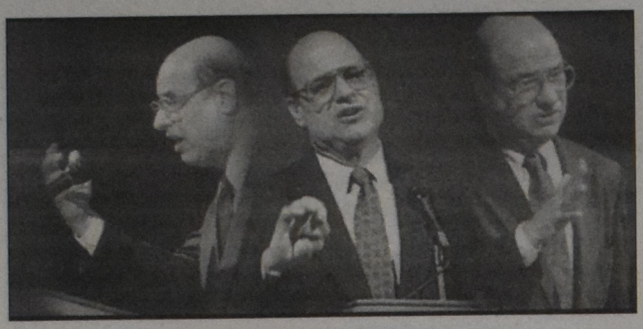
There may be flaws in the 2003 report on restorative justice and it may not be relaxing bedtime reading, but the report is short enough (pages 401-422 in the *Agenda for Synod 2003*) for all members to read. The final report is not due until 2005, so there is lots of time for members to write about it.

What about a debate or a forum in *Christian Courier*? Perhaps then the contours of a just society, of which restorative justice is one aspect, will become more visible.

Bert den Boggende, Brooks, Alberta

Reflection

God's revelation and our responsibility



Tony Campolo, Ph. D.

Sometimes, when we say something over and over again, we become desensitized to what it is we are saying. When we pray the Lord's Prayer, we say, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." In clear, unambiguous words, we are calling upon God to be at work in this world, transforming it into the kind of world he originally created it to be.

In such a world, according to Isaiah 65:17-25, children do not die in infancy, and parents do not worry that their children are doomed to calamities like drug addiction, gang violence, and teen pregnancy. The elderly live long and healthy lives, presumably with all the health care they need. In the Kingdom of God there is decent, affordable housing for all, and jobs available for everyone who wants to work. This passage of scripture even promises environmental responsibility, as it tells us that God's people will not "hurt the earth" anymore. According to the Bible, we people of faith should not be so focused on preparing for the next world, but rather should be partnering with God to transform this world in which we live right now.

To those neo-Marxists who call religion the opiate of the people, who claim we preach about a glorious heaven in order to convince the poor and oppressed to put up with the absurdities of this life, I say, "Read the Bible!" There you will find a God who is utterly focused on eliminating evil and injustice in this world.

We who claim that the Bible is authoritative must recognize that in it we are called to be change agents for God. Those in politics should see themselves as ordained to work for a just social order. Those in business and industry should view their work as an opportunity to meet the material needs of their brothers and sisters. Those in healthcare should consider themselves co-laborers with God, battling together against sickness and death, which is God's will to abolish. Every one of us should seek to understand his or her vocation as a way to see God's will done here on earth as it is in heaven. Being a Godly person is not so much about religious piety as it is about working so the hungry are fed, the naked are clothed, the sick are cared for, and the broken hearted are comforted.

There are many who deride this kind of talk as that old social gospel, claiming it ignores the need for individuals to be saved from sin so they can go to heaven. That upsets me, because I too believe that God calls individuals to be delivered from sin and transformed by faith. But I believe that God does that so that we become people to whom His Kingdom can be established here on earth as it is in heaven.

I know we cannot complete the job ourselves, of course. That is why we Christians, along with our Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters, wait earnestly for the Messiah to come and join us. We look forward to that great day when the good work that God has begun in and through us will be brought to completion. Until then, we must work, watch, and pray the prayer that Jesus taught us, that God's Kingdom comes, that God's will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Looking thru Muslim glasses

CAMPUS CULTURE
Peter Schuurman

A man who had been a missionary to Muslims in India for 25 years came to speak at Brock a year ago. I was impressed with this man because he opened up a way for me to love Muslims more unreservedly. Put differently, he challenged the suspicion that has been bred so deeply in my bones. Everything kept at a distance to us comfortably remains a caricature.

One thing he said that caught me off guard was that Muslims think Christians are violent people. I always thought we were the salt of the earth, but he explained it differently. In Muslim eyes, he said, Christians are the Crusaders who traveled thousands of miles to butcher innocent people in the Holy Land. They are the religious colonists that subjugated their nations through the centuries of European exploration and expansion. These are the people who in two World Wars slaughtered each other by the thousands, and massacred Jews by the millions. These are the faithful who support Israel in its brutal occupation of Palestine, send troops to devastate countries like Afghanistan and Iraq, and send missionaries to convert their families. Finally, as seen on global television, Christian countries are full of violence and promiscuous sex, and have jails teeming with their criminals. Muslims, said this missionary, are scared of Christians.

It does not matter that most of what is mentioned above is absolutely contrary to Christian virtue. It does not matter that much of it was done by people who were more politically motivated than religiously motivated. I'm talking about perception. Muslims see the West as Christian, and the West is imagined in two adjectives: decadence and violence.

We worship the same God

The other thing this missionary insisted was that Muslims worship the same God as we do. "Muslim converts to Christianity would be aghast if it was suggested that Allah (literally 'the God') was an idol," he said. Muslims see themselves as the direct descendents of Abraham through Ishmael, and Moses and Jesus are prophets that continue Abraham's religious commitments. Muslims know God as Paul says anyone can through the creation: in terms of his power and nature (Romans 1:21).

Allah is a great, unknowable God, he explained. He gave this analogy: Allah is like a President who lives far away in a capital. He rules over the land, and makes laws that everyone must obey. The citizens of the land are required to obey all the rules and respect the President. One day everyone will be judged by the President according to their faithfulness to the law.

In Christian terms, God can be seen as a President, too. He rules the land and sets up laws. But one day, the President learns that you have a horrible blood disease and will certainly die. He leaves the capital, comes to your house, and offers his blood for a transfusion. His life becomes yours, and your life becomes his. You have been changed, and you work to make the world a better place in gratitude for this gift.

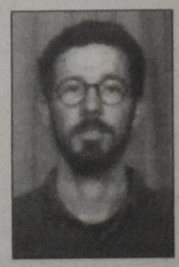
Muslims worship the same God, but they prefer distance from his great power. Muslims are servants to whom God grants guidance – same as Christians. But Christians also see themselves as children of a God who gives them new life.

Islam in crisis

There are many who are saying that today Islam is in crisis. It was the backbone of a great civilization, but now it struggles to find its identity in the modern world. Post-Christendom Christianity also wrestles with its identity. We wrestle with the influence of technology and consumerism, and in North America, it sometimes looks like we are losing the match.

How might we approach our Muslim neighbors? Kierkegaard said that love must presuppose love in the other. Is this possible with a Muslim neighbor, who may be the local physiotherapist or new engineer in town? Assuming we are interested in loving these neighbors (1/6 people in the world), how can we move past stereotypes that preclude them as being loving people? To what extent are we both wrestling with the same challenges?

We don't want to sanitize anyone's violence, but neither should we demonize our fellow citizens. To make friends is always better than predefining foes. We need to try and understand the world from their perspective. Walk a kilometre in their sandals or slippers. We may get so caught up in our own pre-conceptions, we cannot see anything else. We may become so protective, the walls we build cut us off from everyone but our own.



Peter Schuurman is chaplin at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario.

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Church

Hindu fundamentalists take aim at Roman Catholic Church in India

Abhijeet Prabhu

BANGALORE, India (Compass) – Hindu fundamentalists have launched an attack against the Catholic Church in India over the past few weeks, particularly in the rural Catholic stronghold of Jhabua, in Madhya Pradesh, and the more sophisticated region of Goa.

The attacks are directly linked to the politics of conversion in both states.

The Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI) spoke out against the potential misuse of anti-conversion laws in its 26th biennial general meeting, held in Kerala on January 7.

Archbishop Cyril Mar Baselios, along with other CBCI office-bearers, insisted that the church was not opposed to the introduction of laws against forced conversion. However, he said safeguards should be put in place to ensure the laws were not used to discriminate against would-be converts.

Baselios emphasized that such laws would not affect the Catholic Church because forced conversion was not part of the Catholic agenda. He said nobody could deny the right of an individual to convert to the "Path of God" in accordance with their conscience.

Baselios said he was willing to discuss the issue with Hindu organizations such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Bajrang Dal. He hoped these discussions would ensure that, "there is not even an insinuation that the Catholic Church is trying to indulge in forced conversion."

Hindu fundamentalists, already at odds with the Catholic Church, reacted strongly to these comments. In mid January, the VHP demanded an inquiry into assets owned by Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity organization. They also demanded to know the whereabouts of 53,000 children enrolled at schools, ashrams and other institutions run by the charity.

"Mother Teresa ran Missionaries of Charity in the country only to convert the people," said Mohan Joshi, VHP central secretary, on January 17. "There are no clues where the 53,000 children have gone."

Anti-Catholic sentiments are also running high in Jhabua, Madhya Pradesh, one of five Indian states to adopt anti-conversion laws. On January 13, a nine-year-old girl was found raped and murdered on the premises of a Catholic mission school, leading to mass protests in the district.

Government officials believe the incident was a "well-planned conspiracy" against the Catholic school. A Hindu man was later arrested for the rape. However, no action was taken against VHP district chief Khum Singh, who led an angry mob into the school to attack priests and vandalize school property on January 14.

Meanwhile in Panaji, the capital city of Goa, a state also known as the "Rome of the East," a block of carved stone found in the compound of the Bishop's Palace has sparked controversy.

Thirty percent of Goa's citizens are Catholic. However, Hindu fundamentalists have long campaigned for the takeover of several old Portuguese churches in Goa, which they claim were built on the ruins of ancient Hindu temples.

According to RSS chief Raju Velingkar, the stone recently found in the Bishop's Palace is part of a Shiv Lingam or phallus of the Hindu god Shiva, considered by Hindus to be a holy object.

Father Olavo Velho Pereira, director of the Diocesan Center for Social Communications Media, said a process was underway to establish the stone's authenticity.

Sources from the archdiocese said they feared that if the stone did indeed prove to be an ancient temple relic, Hindu activists might lay claim to the Bishop's Palace itself.

Indian church leaders call for action on anti-Christian violence

Anto Akkara

New Delhi (ENI) – Church leaders are calling for official action to protect the Christian community in the Jhabua region of the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh following recent violence directed against Christians there.

"The situation is serious," said Cardinal Telesphore Toppo, president of the Roman Catholic Bishops' Conference of India.

"The violence in Jhabua would not seem to be accidental," Toppo said at a recent press conference in New Delhi reported by Zenit. "It would appear to have been purposely planned by fundamentalists to keep tension high."

The anti-Christian violence broke out after Hindu extremists had accused Roman Catholic nuns and the headmaster of a Catholic school in Jhabua of being responsible for the death of a young tribal girl raped and murdered in the school grounds on January 13.

Police arrested a Hindu suspect within days, but not before Hindu extremists had launched an anti-Christian campaign, burning effigies of priests in public and holding demonstrations in front of Jhabua's Catholic cathedral.

Meanwhile, the Church of North India (CNI) is flying a top lawyer from Delhi to Madhya Pradesh to seek the release on bail of 17 members of the denomination arrested after one of the bouts of violence between Hindus and Christians.

Police arrested the 17 people after a crowd of Hindus armed with weapons and led by a local Hindu legislator broke into a CNI church and school complex not far from Jhabua.

One Hindu died and four others were injured in subsequent fights between church members and the Hindu extremists.

The 17 Christians, including a local pastor, have been charged with murder, but the church insists they are innocent and says that the pastor was not even present at the church complex when the violence broke out.

In subsequent violence, all 20 Christian houses in the area were looted and burned down by Hindu mobs.

"But the police never acted against them [Hindus] even as they burned three Christian homes right in front of the police station," said Suresh Carleton, treasurer of the CNI's local Bhopal diocese.

Said CNI Bishop Lawrence Maida of Bhopal: "It seems the government machinery is only aiming at the members of the Christian community."

Indian church leader accuses government of promoting Hindu extremism

Anto Akkara

Tirunelveli, India (ENI) – The president of the National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) on Wednesday warned of an increase in anti-Christian violence and accused India's federal government of advancing the agenda of Hindu fundamentalism.

There had been a "drastic change in the political atmosphere" in India in the six years since the current government led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came to power, said Metropolitan Geevarghese mar Coorilos, the NCCI president, in an address to the council's general assembly held in Tirunelveli, in southern India in early February.

"Attacks on Christians and other minorities have become part of the hidden agenda of the Hindutva [Hindu nationalist] forces," and the BJP-led government had "in subtle ways ensured the propagation of their fundamentalist agenda," said Coorilos.

The remarks of the NCCI president to the 500 delegates from the council's 29 Protestant and Orthodox churches come against the background of reports of violence towards Christians in various parts of the country.

"We were not courageous enough to stand up and confront the situation," said Coorilos. "We took the easier path of compromise and indifference."

India is scheduled to go to the polls in April to elect a new parliament.

The NCCI assembly, which began on Tuesday and lasts until Friday, marks the 90th anniversary of the council, which was founded in 1914 as the National Mission Council.

"This is a great honor and privilege for us to host you all," said Bishop Jeyapaul David of the Church of South India, whose diocese of Tirunelveli is hosting the assembly.

The gathering opened with a procession of delegates being led to the assembly venue, accompanied by dancers and the sound of traditional drums.

A Hindu and a Muslim joined church leaders in lighting an inaugural lamp to symbolize the common pilgrimage of churches with people of other faiths.

During the assembly, senior officials of India's federal postal department released a special postal envelope to mark the council's 90th anniversary.

An estimated 2.3 per cent of India's population of 1000 million is Christian; 81.3 per cent is Hindu; 12 per cent Muslim; 1.9 per cent Sikh; and other groups including Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, account for 2.5 per cent in total.

Christian women humiliated in Orissa, India

BANGALORE, India, February 17 (Compass) – Christian women from Orissa state, India, were attacked and humiliated for refusing to give up their faith. On February 6, Hindu extremists dragged eight women, including two 15-year-old girls, out of their homes while their husbands were at work and tried to persuade them to renounce Christianity.

When the women refused, the extremists beat them, stripped them naked and forced them to walk through their villages before shaving their heads.

When the attackers made further threats against them, the women and their families fled the two villages of Kilipala and Kanimul in Jagatsinghpur district.

"The villagers tortured and humiliated me before forcibly tonsuring my head. They didn't even spare my daughter," said Sanjukta Kandi, one of the victims.

According to the women, the mob that attacked them contained about 45 villagers, some of whom were their own relatives.

Tensions have flared over the incident, and family members of the victims are still afraid to return home. The women are receiving pastoral care and support from an evangelical church in a nearby town. However, the pastor is reluctant to discuss his involvement, fearing Hindu reprisals against the church.

An Indian television network later interviewed the victims, who said their faith remained firm and they would not re-convert to Hinduism. Christian workers say members of several Hindu extremist groups have been actively working in the area to promote awareness of the "evils of Christianity" and that this may have led to the attacks. District officials promised to take action against the attackers, but had made no arrests at press time.

Church

Pakistani Christian jailed for commenting on Muslim's beard

Barbara G. Baker

ISTANBUL (Compass) – In an apparent attempt to settle an old grudge, a Pakistani man who converted to Islam several months ago has implicated a Christian acquaintance for alleged blasphemy.

Anwer Masih, 30, was arrested on November 30 by police officials in Shadhra, an industrial town on the northern outskirts of Lahore.

Two days before his arrest, Masih met a former neighbor in Paracha Colony whom he knew as Naseer Masih. Unaware that the man had become a Muslim about three months earlier and changed his name to Naseer Ahmad, Masih asked where he had been lately.

"I only asked him where he was living, as I hadn't seen him for a long time," Masih told investigators who visited him in prison several weeks later. "I further asked him about his beard, but Naseer gradually got infuriated, and started telling me that the beard was Sunnah (Islamic custom) and that every prophet had a beard."

According to Masih, Ahmad scolded him for questioning his new beard, but the matter was settled after a few minutes and they parted.

But the next morning, Ahmad arrived at Masih's house with about 100 Muslim militants from Muridke, 70 miles north of Shadhra. Although Masih was not at home, the mob of armed clerics surrounded the house, shouting death threats, throwing stones and trying to set the home on fire.

When neighbors and the district's elected councilor, a Christian named Salamat Masih, intervened, the police were summoned to record Ahmad's accusations against Anwer Masih. Although Ahmad's initial statement objected to Masih's alleged comments about his beard, it made no reference to any derogatory remarks against the prophets.

A few hours later, the police returned and arrested Masih's mother, Ceema Bibi. But councilor Masih again intervened, winning her release after promising to bring her son to the police station.

The next day Masih was handed over to police sub-inspector Zulfiqar Cheema, who registered formal blasphemy charges against Masih and sent him to jail. Although the police official recorded statements by three Muslims who were not present at the disputed incident, he refused to accept statements from two Christian eyewitnesses.

"Anwer's family handed him to the police because they were afraid the crowd would kill him," councilor Masih told the Daily Times.

In the first written Report, Masih was charged under for disturbing anyone's religious feelings and slandering a religious prophet. This time, Ahmad's statement claimed Masih had slandered the prophets and Islamic beliefs.

According to Paracha Colony residents, Ahmad carried a grudge against Masih from an incident two years ago, when Ahmad was indicted for severely beating one of his Christian neighbors, who went into a coma and still remains paralyzed. Anwer Masih had encouraged the victim's family to register a case against their son's attacker, his neighbors said.

Since becoming a Muslim, Ahmad has lived at an Islamic school linked with the banned Lashkar-e-Tayyabba militant group.

Married with four children, Anwer Masih was a day laborer without work at the time of his arrest. He has been confined for the past eight weeks in the Lahore District Jail, where he shares a cell with two Muslim prisoners also accused under Pakistan's notorious blasphemy laws.

The allegations against Masih "need to be investigated thoroughly, before it is too late and Anwer ends up spending a few years in jail," a Daily Times editorial noted on December 13. "So far not a single conviction under the blasphemy law has been upheld in the higher courts."

The editorial stated that the blasphemy law has been "thoroughly abused and yielded nothing but false cases and suffering for the people. If (the government) cannot reform this law, at least it should seriously consider making procedural changes in it to reduce the chances of its abuse."

Launch of new US church alliance scheduled for 2005

Chris Herlinger

New York (ENI) – A new grouping of US churches that would widen ecumenical dialogue within the United States is expected to be launched in 2005.

The new alliance, which is currently being called Christian Churches Together in the USA, would be the first formal group to include representatives of Protestant, Episcopal (Anglican) Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Evangelical, Orthodox and predominantly African-American denominations.

"Never before in the history of the United States has such a broad and widely representative group come together in this way," said a statement from the Disciples News Service after a meeting of 50 church leaders held in early January in Houston, Texas.

Neither the Roman Catholic Church – the single biggest denomination in the US – nor many Evangelical or Pentecostal bodies belong to the US National Council of Churches (NCC), currently the main ecumenical body in the US.

"Present realities in the US leave the churches deeply divided, with no place for Roman Catholic, Evangelical, Pentecostal, historic Protestant, Orthodox, and other Christian traditions to come together in fellowship, in order to strengthen witness in the world," said the Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, general secretary of the Reformed Church in America and chairman of the coalition's steering committee.

The Houston gathering was the fourth such meeting since 2001. Organizers first met amid speculation that such a body might replace the NCC. However, that does not appear to be an aim of the new grouping, with potential members saying it will be a streamlined organization with a small staff.

A statement about the group says it aims to provide "a common witness for Christ to the world" and would speak out on shared public concerns, as well as foster "faithful evangelism" and seek "reconciliation by affirming our commonalities and understanding our differences."

At least 25 denominations are expected to join the new group, the minimum number that organizers say is required for the new alliance to be launched.

Denominations and bodies that have signaled a willingness to form the new coalition are being asked to give their formal approval to the plan over the next twelve months.

Heartfelt singing of a memorized Psalm

Calvin Seerveld

My elderly father used to lead a weekly Bible study at a rest home in Denver, Colorado. When I once attended a session there, an eighty-year old woman spoke up to say, "I hated it in Holland as a little girl when every Monday I had to have memorized another stanza of the rhymed Psalms. But now I am glad! When I can't sleep nights, I just recite the psalms lying on my bed:

"Hygend hert de jagt ontkomen
schreeuwt niet sterker naar 't genot
van de frische waterstroomen
dan mijn ziel verlangt naar God."

A large Afro-American woman sitting next to me in the Bible study circle suddenly stood up and threw out her arms. "Praise the LORD!" she said. "Now I've heard speaking in tongues!"

Psalms 42 and 43 are really one psalm because they have the same refrain. Let's sing a couple of stanzas from Psalm 42 and then just the last stanza of Psalm 43, which has the same refrain.

And you should notice: the first time, the refrain is a sorrowful question. After thinking back on earlier days when you walked to church strong, without a cane, and sang the psalms learned by heart, you realize things are more difficult now. Does God still want to take care of me?

But the third time the refrain appears, it is a strong exclamation! We can trust the LORD to come through, because God has always come through before, even if it was not exactly how and when we expected it. So we need to sing the refrain the third time with a full, confident voice.

As a deer craves fresh clean water so do I yearn, God, for You.
I have thirst for living water, strength your presence can renew.
People threaten me and jeer, "Your God never will appear!"
All alone I feel mistreated, weeping constantly, defeated. (42:1-3)

Heavy-hearted I remember times I joined the worship throng thanking You whose praise engendered dance and songs which made us strong.

Why must I crumple and hide?
Why be crying deep inside?
Will not God come through as ever?
let me thank my God, my savior (42:4-5)

...Let your Light and Truth not falter.
O my God, enable me to be holy near your altar, jubilant as jubilee.
Why should I crumple and hide!
Why be crying deep inside!
God shall come through now as ever!
I am thanking God, my savior. (43:3-5)

Unfortunately today children in our christian and Sunday schools do not memorize the psalms anymore for singing. Unfortunately too, few worship services today in Canada include singing psalms to melodies the older generation of Reformed immigrants knew. A rich birthright is often being traded in for a mess of delicious potage.

Maybe we seniors could ask the domine or Music Director whether they still love the psalms. Maybe we could offer the rising generation a taste of the Genevan psalm melodies with current language, so that anybody tired of short-changing God's psalms with excerpts, or neglect, could hear a voice of faith seasoned by trials of which the young affluent seem to be ignorant and ill-prepared to face in our troubled world, which does belong to God.

Expanded from devotions held for a goodly number of Junior Seniors hosted to lunch at Willowdale Christian Reformed Church by Helen Horlings, Jean Pypker, Dorothe Hellinga, Henny de Cloe and their spouses, Feb. 2004 AD.

Review

Let us now read famous women (marginal notes)

Harry Boonstra

Readers may recognize my borrowing with a twist James Agee's title, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*. Even though I would not praise all the women I discuss in these "notes," they are certainly worth reading about.

In my academic study I read the obligatory biographies of Elizabeth I and Emily Dickinson, but I was generally assigned biographies on what were considered more important worthies such as Martin Luther, Winston Churchill, and T.S. Eliot.

One of the motivations to start reading more women's biographies was a book talk with my granddaughter. I was telling her about Stephen Ambrose's *Undaunted Courage* which I had just read; although impressed with Lewis and Clark, she asked, "Grandpa, have you read the book on Sacagawea?"

I hadn't then but have now.

In the past two years my reading (not quite random but certainly eclectic) has included biographies on Eleanor Roosevelt, Abigail Adams, Jane Addams, Madame Curie, Pearl Buck, Joan of Arc, Willa Cather, Audrey Hepburn, Sojourner Truth, Nellie Bly, Mati Hari (is that what Frisian-born women are really like?), Susanne Wesley, Mary Wollstonecraft, a collection on Moravian women, and others. Here are some of my notes. (Sometimes I refer to a specific biography; at other times I have drawn from several biographies of the person.)

Anne Boleyn

After reading about Queen Elizabeth I, it seemed logical to read about Anne Boleyn next. The history of Henry VIII's second wife is an interesting story, often sad, but not always inspiring. At first one admires her pluck as her father, King Henry, and Cardinal Wolsey try to manipulate her. But as soon as Anne gained power she, in turn, became manipulative and vindictive and she used others. Perhaps that was the only way to survive the court (and church) intrigue.

There are numerous biographies on Anne Boleyn (as well as over 15,000 Internet entries, including a fan club). Any of these titles will reveal much about church and state in sixteenth century England, especially about the twists and turns of the Reformation.

Emma Goldman

A jump to the nineteenth century. My knowledge of Emma Goldman was limited to what I recalled from a footnote in an American history text: the most infamous woman anarchist in America. My hunch is that many *Christian Courier* readers know little more about her than that bit of infamy. But she is worth knowing about. Her life was thoroughly dramatic and captivating. (I put aside the spy novel I was also reading at this time, until I had finished the Goldman biography.)

After a miserable, abusive childhood in Moscow, and later working in dreary factories, she sought to escape from her distressing life by emigrating to America in 1882, full of hope and enthusiasm. Her hopes were dashed as she came to know firsthand the misery of Russian Jewish immigrants in tenements and sweatshops. Soon she began to be involved in the cause of fighting oppression and uplifting the poor. The fuse that ignited her passion for revolutionary change was the 1886 Haymarket Riot and the travesty of hanging the "guilty." Goldman identified with and then became a leader in the anarchy cause, and spent the rest of her life fighting oppressive governments and economies. She also preached against the institution of marriage and the evils of capitalism, and for the rights of women and for birth control. She saw the danger of Adolph Hitler as early as 1932, and after a brief time back in Russia after the revolution she was one of the first to denounce the new Russian tyranny.

She was seen as the most dangerous and evil person in America by some (mothers used to say to their children, "You better be good or Emma Goldman is gonna get you"), but as the voice of justice and equality by others. I like to think that I would have defended and rejected her in about even measure; more likely, I would have joined the establishment and rejected most of her message.

Jane Addams

Social conditions were often horrendous in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as capitalism run amok trampled on the rights and lives of their workers (as capitalism often seems to do). One of the most impressive champions for improved social conditions was Jane Addams.

The over two hundred books published on Addams are well deserved. What I found most astounding was the intense, at times vicious, opposition to her reforms from the industrial and business titans. Some had supported Hull House when it sought to improve the immediate neighborhood, but when it came to improve the lot of children working under abominable conditions in the factories, nearly all the factory owners and other industrialists turned against Addams, since their profits were at risk.

But she persevered, and ranks high with those who sought to fight the system of status quo corruption (a status quo at times encouraged by government and condoned by church) in Chicago and elsewhere.

Nellie McClung

One person who was a great admirer of Jane Addams was Nellie McClung. A good study of her life is *Firing the Heather: The Life and Times of Nellie McClung* by Mary Hallett and Marilyn Davis. Born in Ontario, Nellie Mooney's family traveled west and lived the difficult life of homestead settlers in Manitoba. Much of her adult life was spent here, but she also lived and worked in Alberta and spent her very active retirement years in Victoria.

She is known primarily for two things, first as a novelist and "recitalist" (giving readings from her works), and secondly as a social activist. She became one of the best known women in Canada in both capacities. Although she did not become the famous novelist she had dreamed to be, she was very popular in her time, and her novels still portray her times well.

She fought many evils of her day. She was an ardent member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, sought to improve working conditions in factories and eliminate child labor. Her greatest renown came as a champion for women suffrage, especially in Manitoba. Her greatest "speech" was a sardonic imitation of Premier Sir Rodmont, who had spoken against women voting by patronizing and belittling "the ladies – God bless them."

Manitoba women gained the right to vote 1916, with McClung serving as the chief public proponent.

She also sought greater representation of women in the church. She fought for women's ordination, first in the Methodist church and then in the United Church, which granted women ordination in 1936.

Nellie Bly

Nellie Bly impresses us mostly by her pluck. Adventuresome, self-confident, foolishly courageous, she tackled the bastion of the newspaper world in New York. Although best known for her account of traveling around the world in seventy-two days in 1889, her most daunting assignment was infiltrating the insane asylum on Blackwell's Island by pretending to be insane. During her time there she was exposed to the inhuman conditions and in turn exposed those to the world and saw some improvements made.

(Incidentally, Nellie Bly lives! In a "West Wing" episode last year, President Bartlett trivializes an occasion to honor Bly, but is pulled up short by his wife, who reminds him of Bly's heroic exploits in fighting injustice.)

Georgia O'Keeffe

Georgia O'Keeffe is a representative of part of the modern era. She was an original. Her quirky independence, her immense talent, the legacy of her paintings (as well as the hundreds of (mostly nude) photographs made by husband Sieglitz) made her the proverbial legend in her own life time. She actually reached her greatest fame when she was in her eighties and nineties. Too bad she also was sexually profligate, selfish, and vengeful.

Review

Anne Morrow Lindbergh

The most conflicted person I encountered was Anne Morrow Lindbergh, and she provoked the most conflicting emotions in me. At times I muttered, "Poor little rich girl! You think you got it bad with your fame, houses, nannies, servants, and planes?" But most of the time I could empathize with her incredible struggle.

She never was able to come to terms with the conflicting demands of her writing, her motherhood, and her marriage. And Charles was the greatest barrier to her reaching a balance in her life. Worshiped as the most famous hero of his day, later he was (deservedly) vilified for his admiration of Hitler and his flirting with Nazism in the thirties and forties. He was narrowly brilliant and incredibly stubborn, and in his family life he was dictatorial. Anne's combination of love, respect, fear, duty kept her tied to Charles in a toxic relationship.

Annie Mae Hunt

I had never heard of Annie Mae Hunt, so all I read in *I Am Annie Mae: An Extraordinary Woman in her Own Words. The Personal Story of a Black Texas Woman* (1983) was a discovery. The best word to describe Hunt is indomitable.

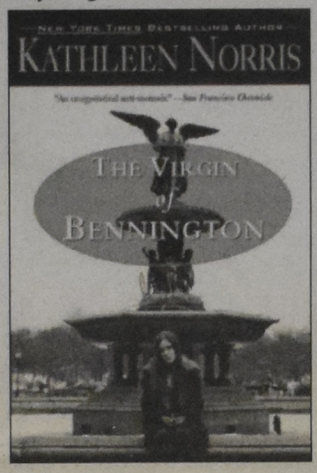
The first page sets the tone: "I were born in 1909 in Washington County on Mill Creek Road, 13 miles out from Brenham near Wesley. I were reared there until I were eight, when my mother moved to Dallas. Five or six years later, it was Depression time and we moved to Navasota, on a plantation where we met a little tragedy. And from there on we went back to Brenham where my grandmother was.... My grandmother was a very wonderful woman. She told me many a story about herself and slavery".

Later we learn that in the "little tragedy" her mother was whipped by white men, they broke Annie's arm, and "Old man Morrety broke my sister's nose with a pistol."

But Annie survives. She marries three times, gives birth to nine children, spends much of her working life washing and ironing, but also has a small business, becomes involved in local and state politics, attends Jimmy Carter's inauguration, and when she is not allowed to join the women's club, The Daughters of Elks, she and other black women start the I.B.P.O.E.W.—Daughters of the Improved Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the World.

Kathleen Norris

Kathleen Norris is always good for supplying me with quotable quotes, especially in the area of spirituality. But in her *The Virgin of Bennington* (2001; an informal autobiography/memoir) she writes mostly about writing. When Norris thought that authors write best out of insanity and despair, her mentor, Betty Cray, disagreed: "Wanting me to write out of joy as well as despondency, and to dismiss the romance of insanity as a sham, she tried hard to convince me of what her friends who had been institutionalized for madness knew all too well: that sanity, the clean and simple appreciation of ordinary, daily things, is a treasure like none on earth" (p.186). On revising she writes: "...it became clearer than ever to me that the imagination works not so much through inspiration as through perseverance. One must slog through the false starts, spot the wrong words and hold out for the right ones, and above all, be vigilant about staying on the path of revision, no matter how uncomfortable or even painful the journey might become" (p.198).



Mary Ann Shadd Cary

My knowledge of African Canadians or black settlements in Canada was and is limited. However, reading the biography of Mary Ann Shadd Cary by Jane Rhodes (1998) was a good (partial) education. Shadd Cary's (1823-1893) family name was originally Shad – the name of a German soldier who served in the British (colonial) army in America. He was wounded, nursed back to health by Elizabeth Jackson, a young, black woman whom he married. In due time Shad became the grandfather of Mary Ann Shadd, who was born in Wilmington, Delaware. Although the family were not slaves, they were severely discriminated against and both Mary Ann and her father participated in the abolitionist movement and the Underground Railroad.

In 1851 Mary Ann moved to Windsor, Ontario, and promptly started a school for black children, since the public schools were often closed to them. She had already been teaching in the United States and she continued teaching black children (off and on) for the rest of her life. Later she also lived in Canada West, a small town near Windsor with a substantial black population, in Toronto and Chattam. In 1867 she moved to Detroit and died in Washington, D. C. in 1893.

Her other profession and passion was journalism. In 1852 she wrote a pamphlet, *A Plea for Emigration or Notes of Canada West*. The pamphlet was mostly a defense of emigrating to Canada, rather than to Liberia or the West Indies, two places strongly promoted by other African Americans.

In 1853 Shadd and several colleagues started a "black" newspaper, Provincial Freeman. Although often working in the background, she became both the soul and the hands of the paper. The continual shortage of money forced her to raise funds, which she did primarily by going on the lecture circuit. She became an excellent speaker and thus began a third passion and career. (Virtually all lecturers in those days were white men. To have a black woman speak in public was considered a scandal in some quarters, and some women were literally chased off the stage.)

One needed to be independent, strong-willed, and stubborn to survive in the kind of life Mary Ann Shadd chose. She had all those characteristics. She took on U.S. slavery and discrimination; Canadian discrimination and intimidation; other Canadian blacks whose vision differed from hers; male dominance; Victorian expectations of female submission; preachers; church bureaucracies; and other institutions and people of power.

"Lady Missionaries"

The book that probably made the most lasting impression on me was Ruth Tucker's *Guardians of the Great Commission: the Story of Women in the Modern Missionary Movement* (1988). These biographical sketches show women with an incredible devotion to the faith and the spreading of the faith. Some women went reluctantly and unwillingly, because their husbands had "the call." Others fulfilled a life-long dream to do mission work in China or Africa. Some were timid, others fearless. They all had to cope with inconceivable hardships of travel, living conditions, illness, and concern for their children. Some of the women were harassed, others raped, others killed. But they persevered, and the story of their grace-filled courage leaves one spiritually breathless.

They also had to contend with male suspicion back home. The denominational leaders and mission boards halted between two opinions. On the one hand, they realized the value of the women's contribution to the mission endeavor; often single women volunteered when no men were available. On the other hand, the leaders were reluctant to assign "men's ministry" to women, or they held to the notion that a woman's place was in the home. Ironically, the cultures to which the women went were often just as chauvinistic (or more so), but the women could be extremely effective, since they posed no threat to the male leaders.

Indeed, how beautiful are the feet of those who bring and have brought good tidings.

I'm glad that my granddaughter asked me to read about Sacagawea, and that I have kept reading women's biographies. During the past twenty years the number of superb biographies about women has increased dramatically, and I urge all, especially men, to read and read some more.

Harry Boonstra
Theological Librarian Emeritus Calvin College and Seminary

O'Keeffe Painting -Ram's Head with Hollyhock-*1930*

Scripture

God is love – agape – sacrificial love

Remkes Kooistra

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love (1 John 4:8).

"God is love." These words were uppermost in the mind of the apostle John when he wrote this letter. So much so, that he repeats them in verse 16.

"God is love." Whoever said this has said it all. There is nothing more to be said. It is the plain truth.

"God is love." Yes, for God does not *have* attributes, but, as we were taught in Calvin Seminary, God *is* his attributes. Only because God is love is there salvation. Only because of God's love we are not lost in a chaotic confusion of doomed perdition. Instead, we have a future. Life makes sense. And life is beautiful, for God is real and he is love.

The epistles of John are difficult to explain since they don't leave much to be explained. They are in a way straightforward and seem to be repetitious. They cover our existence, our creation, and our redemption. God is love – these words keep our history, our world history as well as our personal history, in balance.

God is love. That is why there is hope. And since there is hope, there is endurance too.

Jesus makes breakfast

The gospel according to John ends with a very remarkable chapter – chapter 21. Let us look at it.

After his resurrection, Jesus comes to see Peter. Jesus is the Good Shepherd and he knows that Peter, more than any other one of his disciples, needs a visit. When Cleopas and his friend return to Jerusalem, full of happiness because they've seen the Lord again, they are greeted by a small, enthusiastic group of people with excited shouts: "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon" (Luke 24:34).

So it seems that Simon, that is Peter, saw Jesus even before Cleopas did.

But there were forty days between Jesus' resurrection and his ascension. The disciples had to wait for more instruction and direction. And waiting takes patience. Waiting makes time go by slowly, sometimes very slowly.

As they are waiting at the sea of Tiberias, close to Capernaum, where they used to live, Peter sees his trusted fishing boat lying on the shore. His restless nature demands action.

So he says, "I am going out to fish."

Peter must have thought, "I don't like to sit here, doing nothing. Let me catch some fish; that is at least doing something useful." His friends readily agree. Maybe they said, "Splendid idea!"

So out they went, back to their former profession. To Peter it feels good to use the oars once again, to hoist the sails, and to feel the morning breeze on his face.

Vincent Van Gogh, The Good Samaritan.

Almost three years earlier, Jesus had said, "I will make you fishers of men" (Luke 5:10). But today they just want to be fishers of fish again.

"But that night they caught nothing." Even though they tried several of their favored spots, their nets remain empty. They drift closer to shore furstrated. Maybe they thought, "Why can't we even catch fish anymore?"

It does not lift their spirits to see an early traveler standing at the shore and hear him calling, "Hello, friends, do you have some fish for me?"

A good fisherman is always willing to give away a fish or two. But they cannot help the man, for they have nothing to give away. Peter and his men don't say, "Sorry, we can't help you today." No, irritated, they answer bluntly: "No!"

The man onshore does not seem to be offended. Perhaps he sees fish moving in the water. "Try the other side of the boat and you will catch some fish," he tells them.

When they do, they cannot haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

This was the second time they witnessed a wonderful catch. When it happened the first time, Peter fell at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" (Luke 5:8). Had he been closer to Jesus, he might have said it again.

John, Jesus' most beloved disciple, understands what is happening." It is the Lord!" he says (John 21:7).

John's words make Peter forget all about his fishing trip. Without a second thought, he grabs his tunic and jumps out of the boat into the water. No matter that his clothes get wet; he wants to see his Lord right now – yet, not without his tunic, not in his work clothes.

The others follow in the boat with the fish, one hundred and fifty-three of them, large ones at that.

But they don't need to clean the fish or to bake them. It's all done. Fish and bread are awaiting them onshore. Jesus reveals himself as their gracious host. He is so gracious he even allows them to bring some of the fish they just have caught.

Jesus is Lord. He might have said like Psalm 50: "I have no need of your fish, for every fish is mine. If I were hungry, I would not have to tell you, for the world is mine and all that is in it" (Psalm 50:9-12).

The miracle is that the sovereign Lord, who does not need us, nevertheless is willing to use us. He loves us and we may love him in return – and serve him his own fish.

The interview after breakfast

After a good meal, for the disciples must have been hungry after their night's work, Jesus looks at Peter and addresses him as "Simon son of John" (John 21:15).

It seems a long time ago that Jesus had used these same words. That was when they were in the northern area of their country, in Caesarea Philippi. There Jesus asked, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" (Matthew 16:13). Right then and there Peter had made his courageous confession: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).

Jesus' comment was: "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church" (Matthew 16:17-18).

But today at the lake, Peter is not great. He is the rock that has crumbled. He cannot be the foundation, not even a pillar of the church. He has failed. He has failed miserably.

At the last supper he had stood tall and elevated himself above his brothers with the proud statement: "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you" (Mark 14:31).

But, how sad, only a few hours later he said, "I don't know this man you're talking about" (Mark 14:71). Right then and there he disowned Jesus. The rock crumbled and dissolved into sand.

Now in this early morning hour Jesus addresses him, using his old name, saying, "Simon son of John [or Jonah], do you truly love me more than these?" (John 21:15).

In his question Jesus comes back to Peter's proud, daring statement: "Others may, but I will not betray or deny you. I love you so much, I could never do a thing like that."

The special catch is that in his question Jesus uses the word for sacrificial love: *agape*.

The question brings the blood of shame to Peter's face. What can he answer? He failed. He betrayed his own master and Lord. He betrayed the Christ he had once confessed.

He stammers and seeks for words. But he feels too that his answer must be correct, true.

So he says simply without over-estimating himself, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you" (John 21:15).

It is too bad that our translation has "I love you." Peter does not dare to say *agape*. Humbly, he uses the word for friendship, *philia*. Translated, this is what Peter actually said, "Lord, you know that I like you very much. Even my denial in the courtroom of Caiaphas's house cannot erase this. But I don't claim *agape*, sacrificial love, anymore. I am not better than the others."

Jesus drives the nail into Peter's self-esteem still deeper by repeating the question,

this time leaving out the others. "You, Peter, do you truly love me with *agape*?"

It is as if Jesus wants to say to Peter, "How can I still believe this? How can I ever trust you again?"

The devil smiled mockingly, "Peter, you are only Simon, aren't you? Are you a pillar of the church, or even a foundation stone? Come on. Who will believe this?"

And if this were not enough, Jesus asks the question again, a third time. Thus Peter is reminded of his threefold denial of Jesus. "Simon, tell me, where is your *agape* for me now?" Jesus asks.

Peter answers timidly, asking for help at the same time, "Lord, you know all things, you know that I indeed like you very much."

For the third time Peter does not dare to use the Greek word for sacrificial love, taking instead the word for friendship. Thus Peter is humiliated and humiliates himself three times.

But this is not all. After each answer from Peter, Jesus smiles and accepts his disciple again in loving care. Jesus reappoints Peter as his apostle with a threefold mandate. He says first, "Feed my lambs." Then: "Take care of my sheep." And, finally: "Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17). Peter, the fisher of men, now becomes a shepherd. He may take care of the flock, both young and old.

Since they are on the shore of the lake early in the morning, I suppose they could hear a rooster (or several roosters) crowing. This time, however, they do not cry, "Denier, faithless one!" This time the roosters crow in victory. They crow, "Jesus is victorious. Grace and forgiveness are stronger than sin."

That morning even the animals shared in the triumph of grace.

There remains one surprise in this chapter full of twists and turns. Jesus speaks in prophetic terms of the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he concludes the interview with a short two-word command: "Follow me" (John 21:19). Peter had to learn that in order to be a leader, he had to be a follower.

1 Corinthians 13

In thinking about *agape*, sacrificial love, I may not forget I Corinthians 13. I like to call this chapter the "song of songs" of the New Testament. Just as the Old Testament glorified physical erotic love, so the New Testament praises *agape*, spiritual or sacrificial love. I call this love Christian or divine love. In his *The Four Loves* C. S. Lewis comes close to calling *agape* divine love,[1] but it seemed a bit preposterous to do this, since we find sacrificial love among the Gentiles too and in other religions as well.

The King James translators felt that the word "love" was not specific enough and chose "charity," but *agape* covers more than being charitable. So I decided to call it "sacrificial love".

It is remarkable that Paul writes about this kind of love in a letter in which he more than in any other talks about sex and sexual sins. It is the letter in which Paul confronted the sensual sexuality of the decadent Greek civilization of a metropolitan city for the first time.

In Corinth, Paul was shocked by what he discovered. He must have wondered whether he could expose the small new Christian church to such a pagan, godless environment. Wouldn't it be wiser to choose another field for his missionary activities?

But Paul was a world missionary, and he decided to press ahead. This is why we have two of his Corinthian letters. They are precious to the church.

It almost seems as if Paul was not planning to write his poem on *agape* love. He is actually writing about "spiritual gifts," things like the message of wisdom, the message of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, ability to distinguish between spirits, speaking in tongues, and the interpretation of tongues. I don't think that Paul wanted to say that his list of the spiritual gifts was complete. Paul could have added "etc."

This new Christian church included extremes; some kept on being halfway pagan, others became over-spiritual, caught in desiring an endless variety of spiritual gifts. Paul never says that it is wrong to look for more and different spiritual gifts. Our Christian faith is not a pillow on which to lie down to sleep. The Spirit does not like sleepy faith. Faith moves on.

Yet, Paul knows there are limitations; otherwise the church might become disorganized, a confused and confusing bunch of people. Later on in this letter Paul pleads for "orderly worship." He concludes his teaching about spiritual gifts with words of sound advice: "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy" (1 Corinthians 14:1).

As the Dutch theologian C. J. Den Heyer writes in his book on Paul: "Since Paul wrote real letters, it is not amazing that his writings are very much place- and time-bound. He answered questions about concrete and actual problems." [my translation][2]

Paul's letters are not sermons or theological articles about certain topics. So it is not necessary to find a central theme for each. Nevertheless, certain topics may get special attention. In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, Grosheide mentions pride and *exousia*.[3]

The word *exousia* has a number of different meanings. The dictionary of the Greek New Testament mentions authority, right, liberty, ability, capability; supernatural power, government and official jurisdiction. This means that we often have to look at the context to determine what the best translation should be. It seems to me that in this letter *exousia* would mean something like "legitimate power and ability."

In my youth most Reformed people were quite negative about the spiritual gifts. In a kind of triumphalism, ministers preached that we did not need these spiritual gifts any more. We had grown up and were now mature Christians. Gifts of healing were not needed any more, for we had enough Christian doctors. Gifts of wisdom and prophecy were outdated, for we had Abraham Kuyper. We knew it all or almost all. We had a lot of *exousia*. That was the time of an overly self-confident neo-Calvinism. Present day Calvinism is more humble and includes more appreciation for spiritual gifts.

Most exegetes distinguish three parts in Paul's "song of songs" about sacrificial love. F. J. Pop, for example, does it in this way:

Continued on page 14....

Intangible Things

Heidi VanDerSlikke

Glimpsing reality

My mother turned 80 a few days ago. I went to her apartment the night before her birthday and we spent the evening chatting.

She kept telling me, "I never expected to get so old. No one in my family has lived past the age of 70."

I replied, "All the girls your age are turning 80."

She paused for a moment, then smirked.

After breakfast on her birthday I pulled a box of old photographs out of the closet and began digging through them. Eventually I found the one I was looking for. It's an 8x10 black and white shot of my mother when she was around 35 years old. She's perched on some rocks beside a lake in Northern Ontario. Her full cut floral skirt is draped artistically over the rocks and her white cotton blouse is tucked into a wide, black belt, cinched at her waist. Her dark, wavy hair bobs stylishly around her shoulders.

What's striking about the photo is her facial expression. Her smile is wide and happy. It radiates not only from her lips, but also from the clear blue eyes that sparkle much like the lake in the background.

It's been a long, long time since I've seen my mother smile like that. Decades of arthritis have turned the corners of her mouth downward, and macular degeneration has stolen most of her sight as well as the gleam in her eyes.

The picture reminds me of who she really is. Chronic pain and significant blindness are harsh realities of my mother's world. Nevertheless, they do not add up to the sum of her being. I wanted the old photo to help me think of my mother's whole personhood each day as I pray for her.

That afternoon my mother put on the new outfit I brought her and combed her gray curls. She looked lovely sitting in my brother's living room, greeting the family that came to celebrate with her. We shared a meal and ate birthday cake, and took lots of pictures.

And several times I saw my mom smile. She looks a little different from that old picture, but make no mistake – it's the same woman. I knew she was in there.

It occurred to me that we have come to view aging as a natural process, even though people spend millions of dollars every year trying to slow it down, or eliminate its effects completely. No wonder we rage against it. We were never created to get old, let alone die. Originally we were designed to live forever, in the presence of our creator. When sin entered the world, we lost sight of the truth. Total depravity robbed us of the life we once knew. Decay and death have become ugly elements of life.

That being said, they don't add up to the sum of our beings. We remain image bearers of God, marred as that image may be. We limp along in pain and blindness, but deep inside there's still something left of who we really are. Maybe that's why we go through life with the aching sense that we should be more, we could do better.

The last chapter of Ecclesiastes uses a metaphorical house to describe the aging/ dying process. By itself, it's a depressing passage, offering the grim prospect of slow but sure deterioration. But for believers there's much more to the story.

We are entering the season of Lent, a time to contemplate Christ's arrival in the world to undo the effects of the Fall. Wouldn't it be great if we had a photograph of the Garden of Eden? Or a picture of how we're really supposed to look?

In many ways, we do. We have the image of Christ and his life.

As we approach Easter we may catch fleeting glimpses of what our lives ought to be, and what awaits those who believe.

In one weekend we'll commemorate the monstrous despair of the crucifixion, as well as the sublime victory of the resurrection. Although we've lost sight of who we really are, we can celebrate the fact that our heavenly Father remembers us as whole people, and he plans to restore us to that state.

In the meantime, we may have to settle for occasional memories of a distant garden and the steadfast hope of better things to come.

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God is love – agape

...continued from page 13

Verses 1-3: If there is no love, the life of a Christian is worthless.

Verses 4-7: Love determines the quality of our existence.

Verses 8-13: Love has the quality of being eternal.[4]

We might say that the song has three stanzas.

Stanza 1: Love is Essential

The song begins with an irrealis, marked by the word "if," which is repeated four times. The irrealis tells us that something belongs to a dream world that does not exist. We find a good example of irrealis in *The Fiddler on the Roof* (a marvelous title for a non-existing scenario) when Tevye sings, "*If* I were a rich man, I would build me a staircase leading to nowhere."

Here the New Testament "song of songs" reads: If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels... If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries... If I have a faith that can move mountains... If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames....

Notice that the last "if" has an accumulative effect. To give your body to the flames is more sacrificial than to give all your possessions to the poor. So we could read it in this way: If I give all I possess to the poor and even if I surrender my body to the flames. This would give us five "ifs". But apart from the "ifs," the result is always the same: without *agape*, sacrificial love, all I do is worthless. We ourselves are worthless too, only "a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal."

Calvin comments: "Paul is saying, 'You may have a grasp of all the languages, not only of all men, but of the angels over and above. Do not however get the impression that God will think any more highly of you than of a cymbal, that is to say, if you do not have love.'"[5]

You may know more than anyone else, but without love you are only making noise, but no sense. In the same way you may "fathom all mysteries and all knowledge," you may have a faith that can move mountains, you may give away all you possess and even surrender your body to the flames, yet, all this is worthless, vanity of vanities, without that one thing that is essential – *agape*, sacrificial love. People try to excel. They like to say, "I know, I can, I do;" yet without love they are nothing.

But change the negative irrealis into a positive realis, and you may say: With love and in love I can even speak in tongues and use my spiritual gifts to the glory of God and the well-being of many people. With love I can fathom mysteries and all knowledge, I can move mountains, I can depart from my possessions, I can even be burned as a martyr, yes, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13).

With love, real love, there is no end to what is possible. With the love of Christ, nothing is impossible. Is this possibility thinking? Perhaps.

Stanza 2: Love's Qualities

Knowing now that love is essential for being a Christian, we look at the qualities of this love. You may try to find examples of each one of these qualities in the Scriptures, but I don't think this is necessary or even beneficial. We don't have to imitate other believers (from long ago), not even Christ himself. We have to find our own way of love in obedience to Jesus. We have the awesome task of carving out the way of love for our own life. Sometimes we make serious mistakes, but, never mind, we may try again.

This is how love is according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 13. Love is patient, (it can wait, without losing its temper), it is kind (friendly), it does not envy ("if only I had your gifts"), it does not boast (it does not put itself on a pedestal), it is not proud, nor rude (it respects others), is not self-seeking, (it does not applaud one's own self), love is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs (I remember this slight and that snub and a whole lot more, but I may keep it for later. I have a gunny sack). Real love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth (truth liberates), and so love always protects (it's so easy to destroy) always trusts, always hopes and always perseveres (love never gives up and keeps on praying for lost sons and daughters and other lost souls).

Agape, sacrificial love, is worth more than all the gold, incense and myrrh of the world. The qualities of love can be described (I do not think that the apostle thought that his list of love's qualities was exhaustive.) Yet it is impossible to give an exact definition of what love is. I call love an end-word. Love, like justice, comes at the end of the line. Love is like a rose. About a beautiful rose we can only say, "A rose is a rose." Any definition would do damage and miss the point. A healthy rose blossoms in being a rose. The more rose it is, the more beautiful it becomes. So it is with love. Love is just LOVE.

Stanza 3. Love Lasts Forever

All things, we know, are time-bound. There is nothing that remains the same forever. In Ecclesiastes the preacher says: "There's a time for everything" (3:1). Prophecies will cease, tongues will be stilled, and knowledge will pass away, for all this is only "in part." All this is important in the age in which we live and you might even say "in our lifetime," but God has promised us the eternity of perfection. Then we will know fully just as we are fully known by God.

All we know now is good and sufficient for us to live a God-centered, fruitful life. But it is not the end, not the goal, not the fulfillment. Like a baby, we have yet to grow up. As Calvin once said, "When we are children we need to go to school, but that would be ridiculous for a grown man."[6] For us, on this side of death, there is still so much to learn. One of my table guests is 96 years of age, but every day he is amazed about the wonderful things he reads in his Bible. He asks himself, "How could God become a baby and still remain God?" Then he sighs and knows again we cannot fully understand the mystery of the incarnation. We must try to accept truth beyond our understanding.

"Now we see but a poor reflection" (verse 12). Remember that Paul wrote these words before our glass mirrors had been invented. Reflection in a metal mirror is usually not perfect even though it reflects the person it mirrors.

Everything is temporary and "in part," but love will last forever. Love has the quality of eternity, Paul says in his concluding sentence: "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (v. 13).

It is sad to see how these words caused the controversy they did. In the struggle of the Reformation, the Roman Catholic Church maintained that love was greater than faith, but the Reformation believed that faith was to be valued more than love. Sola fide was the truth according to the Reformation. Was there a conflict with 1 Corinthians 13:13? "No," said Calvin and he explained: "I say that faith is superior to love in many of its effects. It is clear from that, that (when) love is said to be greater here, (this does not mean) in every respect, but because it will last forever, and now has a primary role in keeping the church in being."[7]

You see, the solution is quite simple and becomes even more acceptable when we consider the Greek word (*meidzoon*) that Paul uses for "the greatest." That word refers to measurements, not to quality. As Calvin explained, love lasts forever.

After we cross the river of death, we will see God face to face, and faith is not needed anymore. All hope will be blessed reality and disappear. But love, love for God and for each other, will still be there and will blossom. This is the meaning of 1 Corinthians 13:13.

Now before we leave this chapter, I will quote two verses in which Paul comments on the relationship of faith and love. In what is considered Paul's oldest letter, that is in 1 Thessalonians, Paul writes, "We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess 1:3). "The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love" (Gal 5:6).

Chrysostom, the famous preacher and pastor of the church in Constantinople who died 400 C.E., got excited about his faith. In his Easter sermon he exclaimed: "Let us all enter into the joy of the Lord!... Let no one fear death, for the death of our Savior has set us free.

"He has destroyed it by enduring it.... Hell took a body, and discovered God I took earth, and encountered Heaven It took what it saw, and was overcome by what it did not see.

"O death, where is thy sting?

"O Hades, where is thy victory?"[8]

I conclude this chapter with a few words about the love, *agape*, of God. The first thing to remember is John 3:16: "God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Next there is also the verse at the beginning of this chapter (1 John 4:7-16): GOD IS LOVE. GOD IS AGAPE!

Notes

1. C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves* (London: Fontana Books, 1960), p. 115. And this brings me to the foot of the last steep ascent this book must try to make. We must try to relate the human activities called "loves" to that Love which is called God a little more precisely than we have yet done. The precision can, of course, be only that of a model or a symbol, certain to fail us in the long run and even while we are at it, requiring correction from other models. The humblest of us, in a state of Grace, can have some "knowledge-by-acquaintance" (connaître) some tasting of Love Himself; but man even at his highest sanctity and intelligence has no direct "knowledge about" (savoir) the ultimate Being-only analogies. We cannot see light, though by light we can see things. Statements about God are extrapolations from the knowledge of other things which the divine illumination enables us to know.
2. C. J. Den Heyer, *Paulus* (Zoetermeer, The Netherlands: Meinema, 1998), p. 154.
3. F. W. Grosheide, *De Eerste Brief van den Apostel Paulus aan de Kerk te Corinthe* (Amsterdam: Bottenburg, 1932), p. 28.
4. F. J. Pop, *De Eerste Brief van Paulus aan de Corinthier* (Nijkerk, The Netherlands: Callenbach, 1965), p. 299.
5. John Calvin, *The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, in Calvin's Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Wm. Eerdmans, 1960), p. 275.
6. Ibid. p. 281.
7. Ibid. p. 283.
8. John Chrysostom, "The Easter Sermon of John Chrysostom," Medieval Sourcebook (http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/chrysostom-easter.html).

Politics

The un-United Nations (I)

Harry Antonides

The time has come to revisit the basis upon which membership in these bodies is determined. The UN must consider suspending or expelling members states which have failed in their obligation to the organization and violated the basic principles of the Charter.
(Foreign Affairs Minister, Bill Graham)

Mr. Koffi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations has been invited to address the Canadian Parliament this spring. This is the first time a UN chief spokesman has been asked to speak at this forum.

While announcing this event, Prime Minister Paul Martin explained that Canada spends a lot of time on our relationship with the United States. But he believes that our future well-being and prosperity and that of our children depend "fundamentally "on our ties with the rest of the world. Speaking at the recent World Economic Forum in Switzerland, the Prime Minister said that "no country has as great an opportunity and responsibility to make this [the future restructuring of international relations] happen as does Canada."

Considering the current tension about the role of the United States and the United Nations, the timing of Mr. Annan's speech to the Canadian Parliament speaks volumes. It reiterates that the current Liberal government wants to chart a course independent of its neighbor to the south.

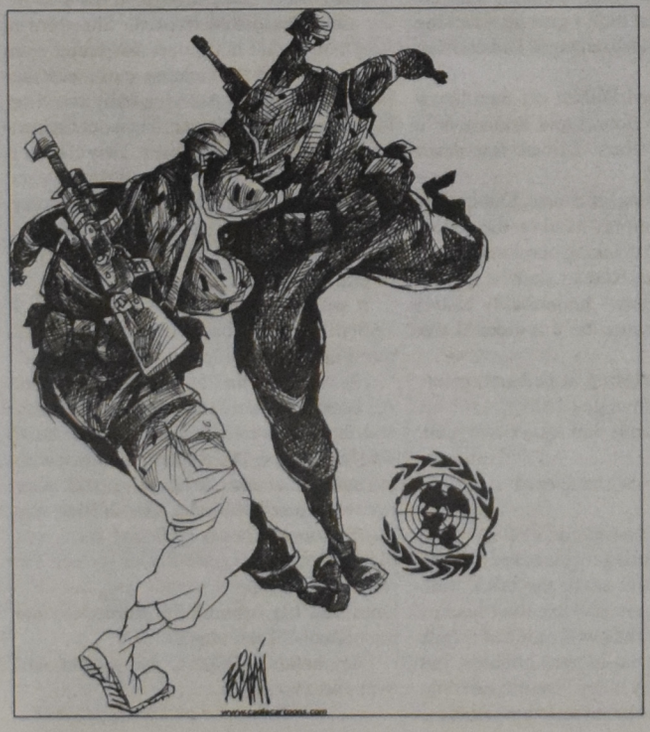
Is that a good policy choice? Your answer depends very much on what you think of the United Nations, which in turn depends on the side you choose in the now raging controversy of multilateralism versus unilateralism.

A house divided

This is of course a complicated matter that requires far more detail than I can bring to it in a few brief articles. Besides, who can fully comprehend the convoluted ways nations interact, given the disparity of power, wealth and influence among them, conflicting ideologies, the wrongs and rights of the past, long-festering grievances, hypocrisy, deception, and hatred and criminality on a scale that staggers the mind.

It cannot be denied that the United Nations has the potential to do much good – and has done some of that. In fact, many look to the UN as the hope of the world. Is that a realistic expectation? After more than half a century of existence, its faults and failures are all too evident. It has two serious if not fatal defects.

The first is that all member states, whether democratic or ruled by tyrants, are considered equal. This means that many UN members are in violation of the very principles and purposes they are pledged to uphold.



The second is that the conflicting ideologies of the UN member nations severely hamstring its effectiveness. One way to get around that obstacle is to resort to doublespeak and deception. This must be behind the statement of Kurt Waldheim, UN Secretary-General from 1972-81, who described the UN as a mechanism for "lying in support of peace." Inevitably, the UN lacks an essential requirement, namely, integrity. Sadly, its entire history provides ample proof for this statement. Time has only exacerbated that reality.

It seemed such a good idea in 1945. The League of Nations was no more, expired on the killing fields of World War II. Something had to be done to prevent the unspeakable horrors that had devastated Europe and wiped out millions. "Never again" was the watchword.

And so the United Nations was born with high hopes for a new dawn. Clever idealists designed a new way for managing the world. There was one major problem; membership was open to all.

And so they came, all duly signing on for the lofty goals outlined in the UN Charter: Here is a sampling of what they signed on to:

"We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and

"To reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and

"To establish conditions under which justice and respect for obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained...."

The Purposes and Principles of the UN similarly brim with good intentions. Here are a few excerpts:

"To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace,...

"To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principles of equal rights and self-determination of peoples,..."

"To achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for the fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion."

What happens when a member state, as many do, blatantly violates these enumerated lofty principles in the treatment of its own citizens? Such states can hide behind article 2,7:

"Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter; but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII."

Duplicity and incompetence

The UN has performed some very useful services such as providing humanitarian aid to starving and suffering people, and overseeing large-scale immunization programs in Third World countries. In some cases it helped to maintain the peace in volatile parts of the world, although its so-called peace keeping role has been greatly overrated – especially by the Canadian elite.

The UN has been an abject failure in situations were the need was not for peacekeeping but for determined military action.

One of the most tragic instances of failure occurred in 1994 in Rwanda where, despite the UN's presence, machete-wielding, crazed Hutus slaughtered 800,000 Tutsi tribe members and moderate Hutus.

The Canadian General Romeo Dallaire pleaded with UN headquarters for more soldiers and resources. But his urgent warnings of a coming genocide fell on deaf ears. Deprived of a sufficient number of well-trained and disciplined soldiers, the general was forced to watch helplessly as little children and women were hacked to death. This experience left him an embittered and emotionally scarred person. (For a detailed description of this horrendous crime, see Romeo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The failure of Humanity in Rwanda.*)

In a significant way the UN has become a platform for regimes that have no intention to do what the UN charter so grandly proclaims. It has served as a bully pulpit to beat up on the West and to accuse it of having enriched itself by robbing the poor nations. Perhaps most destructively, Third World tyrants and their allies have used their UN connections and influence to whitewash the cruel oppression of their own people.

The accusers of the West have some powerful ammunition. Although not exclusively so, the colonization of the non-western world is to a large extent a story of exploitation and, at best, patronization. After World War II, de-colonization was completed in mere decades. Tragically, it often did not bring the kind of freedom and prosperity that was anticipated. On the contrary, in many newly independent countries, oppression and suffering is still the daily lot of millions.

Who is to blame, and how can these deplorable conditions be rectified? This is where the enemies of the West have a field day. It's your fault, they say, because you stole our resources. And you owe us an admission of guilt and restitution. This is pay-back time.

These accusations against the rich nations acquired a lot of momentum by the popularity of Marx's ideas, especially in the universities. The merging of de-colonization and class conflict ideology turned out to be a potent weapon on behalf of the impoverished Third World. Many pundits in the West, guilt-ridden by the accusations of the Third World and finding in Marxism a framework to understand the world, adopted an attitude of alienation and even contempt toward their own culture. Some have diagnosed this as a suicidal impulse of the prosperous but morally and spiritually adrift West (See James Burnham, *Suicide of the West*).

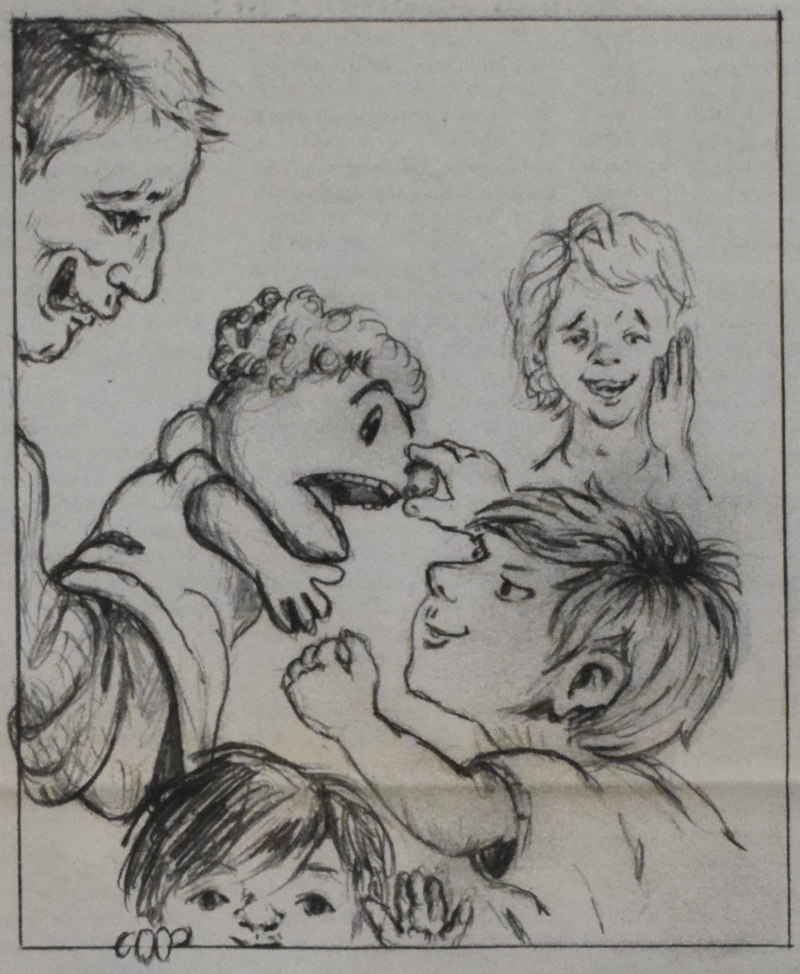
It is in this confluence of vast historical changes that Marxist ideology found a ready outlet at the United Nations. Defenders of the West and its virtues, such as open societies, the rule of law, a free

*See **United Nations**, page 17...*

Short Story

"Hey Kids, Say Hi To Dilbert... Ouch!"

Ron de Boer



Each summer, I volunteer to teach the four-year-old class at Vacation Bible School at our church, and each summer I get beat up mercilessly by both churched and unchurched brats alike. They punch me, pinch me, headlock me, grind their little knuckles in my mouth, pull my ears, stick their stubby fingers down my throat, pull at my tongue, and poke me in the eyeballs.

I speak, of course, in the voice of my alter-ego, Dilbert, my VBS hand puppet.

To the ladies who ask me to teach VBS every summer, I'm the one male in the church who shows up with my Tim Horton's coffee mug and clown hair; to the little gaffers who get dropped off by their Dads on the way to the golf course, I'm the guy with his arm up the backside of their favorite friend in the whole wide world – Dilbert, a wide-mouthed, yellow-haired, omni-happy, puppet with big blue saucer eyes.

The real teacher of said gaffers is my wife, Karen. She organizes the kids in a circle around the puppet theatre for Dilbert's big entrance each morning. On cue, Dilbert bursts through the rainbow curtains and calls the kids meatballs and pinheads and anything else he can get away with until Karen squeezes his neck (my wrist) and tells him to pipe down.

The kids laugh and laugh. When Dilbert says goodbye, I hide in the puppet theatre for a few minutes then sneak out and join the circle where they are singing a song with Karen.

There's always one kid who eyes you suspiciously when you come out from behind the puppet theatre. He squints at the puppet theatre then squints back at you and then starts inching his butt across the carpet toward the curtains to see what Dilbert is doing back there.

I usually head the suspicious kid off before he can catch a glimpse of Dilbert's limp body lying on the carpet. There's nothing sadder to a kid than a lifeless puppet.

The next morning, you're crouched behind the puppet theatre curtains ready for Dilbert's big entrance when in pops the suspicious kid's head through the curtains. He catches you all folded up with your knees beside your ears behind the puppet theatre curtains.

"Out," you say sternly. The kid's head disappears, but then you hear him telling all the other kids it's Mr. Ron behind the curtain. "Mr. Ron is Dilbert!"

Before Karen can stop them, all of them are sticking their heads through the curtain and staring at me as if I'm some freak show exhibit at Ripley's Believe it Or Not in Niagara Falls.

That was the first year. Now, I don't hide behind a puppet theatre curtain. I simply sit on the couch in the council room where we teach our class of four-year-olds; I assume Dilbert's monster voice and naïve personality, and I talk to the kids.

It's amazing how kids willingly and trustingly interact with puppets. They start off answering all of Dilbert's questions about where they live or whether their mom and dad go to church or how many brothers and sisters they have. Usually Dilbert gets a couple of good cracks in about the teacher's (Karen's) wrinkles or her fake nose that looks so real.

The kids laugh and correct Dilbert constantly. They generally treat him as if he's the village idiot. Then they start beating him up, beginning with little flicks and then graduating on to a full out pummeling until I say Dilbert has to go visit his cousin for the rest of the morning.

Every year since Dilbert made his debut, that aforementioned suspicious kid – he turned seven last year – wanders into our room at recess, for old time's sake. He cases the room with his hands jammed in his jeans and then, recognizing me, comes over and stomps on my toe. He still takes great joy in pulling Dilbert's body off my hand and yelling, "Haaaaaaaa."

Dilbert bites him, head butts him with his plastic eyes, tries to swallow the kid's face, but to no avail.

Last year, the suspicious kid, whose name is Rodney, showed up every day while Dilbert sat on the couch chatting with the four-year-olds and didn't give up attacking Dilbert until he had disengaged Dilbert from my hand.

Once, he pulled Dilbert off then threw the puppet to the floor. I told Rodney he'd just murdered Dilbert. Dilbert was dead. Thanks a lot, kid.

The next morning, of course, Dilbert was perched happily on my hand on the couch, telling stories and cracking one-liners about Karen's funny ears. Rodney showed up with bags under his eyes – he probably hadn't slept a wink because he'd murdered our puppet!

Instead of marveling at Dilbert's resurrection, the kid strangled Dilbert until his body lay limp in my lap again, and said, "Haaaaaa."

I gritted my teeth and smiled.

On the second last day of VBS last year, I looked outside during recess to see Rodney standing by himself along the brick wall. The other kids were playing road hockey or tracing their bodies with sidewalk chalk or blowing big coat-hanger bubbles, but there stood Rodney all by himself, nibbling on a cookie from the refreshment table.

It struck me that I had never seen Rodney interacting with the other kids. I grabbed Dilbert and the two of us went outside to talk to Rodney.

"Watcha doing?" Dilbert said.

Rodney's eyes lit up. He immediately lunged at Dilbert. Fortunately, now standing, I moved Dilbert to a higher position – out of Rodney's reach.

"Why do you always hit me?" Dilbert asked Rodney.

Rodney growled and took another swing at Dilbert.

"I don't like it when you hit me," said Dilbert.

"Cause I love you," Rodney blurted out before pawing at Dilbert again.

"If you love me then you should hug me," Dilbert said. I nodded in agreement then moved my toes back for fear Rodney would stomp them.

Rodney wrapped his arms around Dilbert's head. "You're Dilbert," he said to me. "I want to be Dilbert's daddy."

He then stomped on my toes and ran into the church bathroom.

On the last evening of VBS, we invite all the kids and their parents back for a barbecue and program in the church sanctuary. We sit on the grass beside the church and eat hot dogs and sip cream soda while the kids run around one last time with each other.

Right before going into the church for year's last program, I watched an old minivan pull into the parking lot. The sliding door screeched open and who should hop out of the van but Rodney. He had a grin the size of a banana.

His mother came around to his side of the van. She looked frazzled. She wore a long t-shirt that hung over her faded jean shorts and high top running shoes with the laces pulled loose. A crying baby could be heard from inside the van. Then out hopped two more Rodney look-alikes. They couldn't have been more than two and three years of age. Rodney's mother pulled out a rusty stroller, dropped the baby into it and headed over to the hot dogs and Coleman coolers of pop.

It was then that Rodney spotted me. I smiled. He smiled back. Then he turned and threw open the sliding door to his van again.

His mother yelled at him. He ignored her. All I could see were the bottoms of his feet, and then he emerged again. On his hand was his own puppet, a scraggly clown with red matted hair and one button eye; the other eye was a piece of thread. The stuffing was coming out of its one arm and there was blue magic marker scribbled on its face. He moved the puppet's mouth with his little hand and his own mouth mimicked the movements of the puppet.

"My name is Dilbert," his puppet said over and over again.

Continued on bottom page 17...

Reflection

United Nations

...continued from page 15

press and free institutions, again and again were put on the defensive. What made matters worse is that many people in the West, especially among its elite, are ambiguous and conflicted about the worth of their own society.

Think in this context about the Cold War between the free nations and the Soviet Union, as that found expression at the Security Council and other agencies of the United Nations. Many on the ideological Left were convinced that the United States and the Soviet Union were morally equivalent, at best.

The same idea of moral equivalence is still at work in the current conflict between the free nations and those ruled by tyrants as that is played out at the UN. All members have the same rights and privileges. What is worse, the high-sounding proclamations of the UN provide immunity for tyrants. The confusion multiplies when scoundrels insist that the real conflict is between the rich West and the poor countries mired in destitution and hopelessness.

Think of Zimbabwe, whose thuggish president defends himself by blaming Britain and the rest of the free world for the destruction and suffering his policies have inflicted on a defenceless people. Once an exporter of food, Zimbabwe citizens are now starving. Tragically, there are many more instances of such cruelty and hypocrisy that plague the UN, which was begun with such high ideals and glowing proclamations

Next time: More about the struggle between the democratic West and the non-free nations within what some have dubbed a house of cards. Are they right?

Harry Antonides hantonides@sympatico.ca

Dilbert..continued from p.16

His mother came over to us. "So you're the one who's got him all gaga over this puppet thing. No shuttin' him up until I got him that one." She broke into a fit of coughs then fiddled impatiently with her restless baby.

During the program I watched Rodney sing his heart out and look at his mother every time one of the leaders repeated something we did that week, begging her to share his joy.

After the program was over, I called Rodney into the council room. We sat on the couch. His Dilbert and my Dilbert talked for a while.

Then his mother appeared at the door. "There you are! Would you get in the van. Geez! We're waiting for you." She turned and stomped out of the church.

"You come back again next year, Rodney, okay?" I said.

He answered with a head butt of his Dilbert on my Dilbert.

"Hey, Rodney," I said. "Dilbert told me this morning he'd rather go live at your house until VBS next year. Is that okay? Will you take good care of him?"

Rodney didn't answer. For a moment I thought he was going to actually say something to me. Then he grabbed Dilbert off my hand and disappeared out the door. Through the window I saw him sprint across the parking lot and dive into his mother's rusted mini van.

I've got a new puppet now. His name is Ricky the Ringmaster, and he wears a red tuxedo and yellow top hat with a green jewel on the front. I'm in the process of training him to duck punches and withstand torturous pinches. Perhaps this year I'll teach the little gaffers that puppets have feelings, too.

Just like little boys named Rodney.

Meeting Christ at the cross – a help or hindrance to our faith

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

The gospel very often seems alien to us.

Roberts C. Roberts,
Spirituality and Human Emotion

Attending this movie is a spiritual decision...the content is just too personal...that it will take inner longings and determination to view it...

Lorna Dueck on
The Passion of the Christ, Globe and Mail.

Cindy was eight when her parents separated and ten when they divorced. Both parents were amicable towards one another through the whole process for Cindy's sake. Cindy felt confused, but they kept telling her everything would be all right. Eventually, her father moved to another city because of a job promotion. Still, Cindy was able to see him every second month when she flew over for a weekend. Over time her mother began dating another man. When Cindy was fifteen her parents sent her to the best boarding school money could buy. They also supported her financially during her college years and encouraged her in whatever direction she wanted to go. Cindy did well and eventually landed a challenging corporate job.

At age 31 Cindy went to see a therapist. She was not sleeping well and had lost her lust for living. She felt disconnected from herself and others. She complained of chronic anxiety and the feeling of impending doom. Over time, in therapy she became aware she was the victim of a gift-wrapped rational divorce where the parents rationalized reality. Cindy understood their divorce cognitively but never came to terms with it emotionally.

A gift-wrapped rational faith

We often do the same with our faith. We intellectualize what we believe. We live according to our Christian values or principles and when painful things happen we try to make sense of them in our mind. We then tell ourselves to get on with our lives. We forget our emotions are not nearly as quick as the mind to move on. A good example is the well-known film *Shadowlands* in which C.S. Lewis has all the intellectual answers at his fingertips but his personal pain, after the death of his wife, throws his view of God in total disarray.

Mel Gibson, a conservative Roman Catholic has spent an estimated $50 million of his own money to create *The Passion of the Christ*, which I have not seen as I am writing this column. Gibson believes "there is no greater hero story than this one – about the greatest love one can have, which is to lay down one's life for someone." He thinks we have gotten so used to seeing pretty crucifixes on the wall that we forget what really happened.

He recently said: "Growing up, I didn't realize what was involved in this.... The full horror of what Jesus suffered for our redemption didn't really strike me...."

Suffering sounds and loving laments

We all have growing up stories about what helped or hindered our faith development. And, in all likelihood, as parents now we probably differ as to what is or is not helpful for our children in this regard. I always considered myself fortunate to have seen the film *Jesus Christ Superstar* in the early nineteen-seventies. This film catapulted me out of my intellectual comfort zone! The music so captured my emotional senses I could not help but feel I was part of a variety characters who were struggling to come to terms with the enormity of the Christian story – albeit presented in a very provocative way and frowned upon by most mainland churches! Yet, this film did more for me in terms of my faith development –and my relationship with God – than any sermon or devotional reading ever could. How can I ever forget the suffering sounds of Christ as He sang:

Why I should die
Would I be more noticed than I ever was before?
Would the things I've said and done matter any more?

And:
Can you show me now that I would
Not be killed in vain?

Or the loving lament of Mary Magdalene:
I don't know how to love him
What to do how to move him
I've really changed yes really changed...

The cross, Christ and us

R. Roberts believes healthy faith development includes emotions. He suggests (as noted before in another column) "whatever else Christianity may be...it is a set of emotions.... If I don't love God and my neighbor, abhor my sins, and rejoice in my redemption, if I am not grateful, hopeful, and at peace with God and myself, then it follows that I am alienated from Christianity."

At the same time he is well aware that many of us believe emotions "are more like warts...at best useless and at worst troublesome little accretions to the personality" and when we describe someone as "emotional" we do not intend it as a compliment. We mean it as being weak, immature, hollow, shallow and so on.

Yet, in the twenty-first century we are learning that expressing deep emotions is a necessary part of emotional and spiritual development. How can we not shed sorrowful tears when suffering painful experiences? Roberts reminds us, Churchill, Socrates, the apostle Paul and Jesus himself, were people with strong emotions.

In terms of *The Passion of the Christ* it is easy to come up with intellectual critiques of the film regarding the accuracy of the historical facts, the legitimacy of who said what, when and why as well as to question the need for depicting the gruesome violence Jesus suffered. It is also easy to "minimize" the crucifixion by acknowledging this was an accepted way of punishment for various criminals and possibly not the worst way to die in light of other torturous death experiences. And it is easy to critique the film in terms of various post-modern reinterpretations of the gospel that Jesus' death was not knowingly redemptive nor his rising from the dead a historical fact.

On the other hand, it could be a whole different experience if we bring ourselves into the story, acknowledging our need for redemption as well as our need to reconnect with God so we can learn how to live in love and healing in this world. Dueck reminds us it is not a movie about faith systems and it strips away everything humanity created for access to God and leaves us simply with the cross and Christ.

Sounds frighteningly personal doesn't it? Do we even dare for an hour or two to suspend our intellectual and rational criticism of *The Passion of the Christ* and simply come with an open mind and be part of his suffering as if we had been there as one of his followers so many years ago? More next month.

Arlene Van Hove is a psychotherapist with Cascade Christian Counselling Association in Surrey, B.C.

Opinion

Yes . . . but

Bert Hielema

Oil, oil and (no) more oil

I think I am a bit of a fanatic, a crusader and a voice crying in the wilderness. I am almost obsessed with the notion that we are on the verge of something terrible and that nobody is doing anything about it.

My fear is that the price of oil is on its way through the roof, blowing it off and exposing our naked dependency on the one ingredient that forms the basis of our modern life. I suspect that within five years gasoline, oil, natural gas, propane, will be four times the price it is today, so that fuel now selling for 75 cents a litre will cost $3.00.

Just imagine, a trip to work jumping from $4.50 per day to $18.00, with similar increases for food and home heating.

Reaching the limits

What triggered my concern this time? A little news item in the *Globe and Mail* Report on Business, buried on a back page. The blurb mentions Matthew Simmons, who hails from Houston Texas, and is, I gather, Vice President Dick Cheney's chief petroleum-futures guru. What Cheney knows about oil he has learned from this man.

Mr. Simmons, founder of Simmons & Company International, an independent investment bank specializing in the energy industry, describes himself as a lifelong Republican. As a banker with 30 years experience in that field, he makes loans for oil exploration and production equipment, such as devices able to spot the most remote deposits and drills that can go up and down and sideways in all directions to suck up the last drop from an oil well. Since this is basically his money, Matt Simmons is probably the world's most knowledgeable insider in the entire world-wide oil business.

This is what the paper said: "Prominent Houston energy analyst and investment banker Matt Simmons is questioning whether Saudi Arabia will be able to continue playing the role of swing producer for the global oil market."

A few years ago, whenever an oil shortage threatened, the White House would phone its friend, the King of Saudi Arabia, and arrange for an extra one or two million barrels of oil a day, available at the turn of a tap.

No longer. Not only are the USA and Saudi Arabia not on a friendly footing anymore since Sept. 11 when 15 of the 19 hijackers were found to be Saudis, but the Saudis no longer have the capacity to open the spigot to help out. And that is scary. That means that the world has no fall-back position anymore. We have reached the oil-peak.

I punched Matthew Simmon's name into Google and read his latest presentation on January 29, 2004 to the Marine Technology Society in his hometown Houston Texas. His topic: "Outlook 2004: Easy Questions....Hard Answers."

Here are some of the questions: Why are oil prices higher than expected? Why are natural gas prices even higher? Are proven reserves possibly not proven? How secure is the world's oil and gas reserve base?

He then wonders whether the system is stretched too hard and states that a high percentage of the global energy system is now at effective peak capacity. The world simply cannot produce more than it already does. He also notes that the majority of the energy infrastructure is very old.

Based on his observations he thinks that we are now facing genuine "limits to growth." From his experience he knows that almost all current production comes from six old fields. Through water drive/water injection most have maintained a steady reservoir pressure, but once this (costly) program ends, all fields face steep declines.

His conclusions are that the world faces serious energy challenges because low prices have lulled people into massive complacency, and awful financial returns have prevented serious energy research and development and have encouraged wasteful energy use.

The era of extravagant energy use is now coming to an end, but he fears that the ending is too late because we are not ready by a long shot with renewable options.

Most of Saudi Arabia's reserves of oil are held in one huge field, the Ghawar. It has been pumped since 1948 and is showing signs of exhaustion with its southern end now flooding with water. Perhaps it can keep production constant for another year or two before it too has used up half of its total oil resource and rolls over to depletion.

The same holds true for most of the Middle East, except possibly Iraq. It was prevented from selling off its oil during the past 12 years, when prices were lower than they will ever be again. One estimate is that it has 110 billion barrels of reserves, enough to keep the world going for 4 years. Who said that this war was not about oil?

The failure of government

I am not only a crusader of sorts, but also a stubborn guy. Once I am focused on something I am like a bulldog and don't let go. So a bit more on Oil, this time looking how economists view the energy future, the failure of governments and business to prepare for the looming "*after oil*" era, and the consequences for us.

You may remember Jimmy Carter, US president from 1976 -1980, succeeded by Reagan. He coined the acronym 'MEOW,' the 'Moral Equivalent of War,' aimed at the fight for renewable energy. President Carter – the founder of Homes for Humanity – installed solar panels on the White House (promptly removed by his successor), turned the thermostat there to 65 Fahrenheit, wanting to preserve energy and was convinced that it would take at least 25 years to prepare the world for a pollution-free life without oil. (Global warming was then not yet a factor.)

Alas, nothing was done. On the contrary, we have gone in reverse since Carter. The current White House occupant said in 2002: "We need an energy bill that encourages consumption."

Can we make up for lost time? Not likely, thanks to market economics, which lives by a simple rule: if the price goes up, supply will automatically increase as new producers pile in to make a fast buck. That works for merchandise in general, but not for oil: you can't get more of something that isn't there no matter how high the price.

After the turning point

Economists are also erring in another area: The stone age didn't end because we ran out of stones and neither will the oil bubble burst because we ran out of oil. Business looks at the reserves and say: "Why worry, there's lots left." And that's true. There still is as much oil for the future as we have used up in the past. What is forgotten is that the way up was easy, with supply keeping pace with higher need. The way down from the peak, however, will be downhill all the way, as our SUVs and our larger houses and billions of more consumers require more and more of that quickly disappearing black blood.

After the turning point – now here or soon to appear – three things will happen: (1) Some people will have to go without: simply can't afford it anymore. (2) Competition for the reduced supply of oil will become fierce. (3) Prices will be set by the rich who alone can pay the steep rise.

Carter some 30 years ago was voted out of office because he did something highly unusual: as an atypical politician he told the truth. It never works in politics.

Politicians say that now we are less dependent on oil because we have substituted away from it. This is true up to a point: oil has declined as a percentage of all energy use – thanks to natural gas and some needed conservation – but as a whole the world uses 30 percent more oil than it did in Carter's days, and demand is still growing by almost 2 percent a year, thanks to China, India and greater automobile and truck ownership.

The laws of economics simply don't work in the case of oil for another reason: business assumes that renewable energy will come in play just in time to take over from oil when the right 'price signal' kicks in. The theory is that when oil becomes too expensive, the alternatives will flood into our homes and cars and solve our problems.

Well, it ain't gonna to be that way. Carter was right: at least a quarter of a century of sustained effort and concentrated action – MEOW, the Moral Equivalent Of War – is needed to accomplish that. And we have hardly started.

So what will happen? Worldwide oil's main uses are for food and transport. Agriculture is entirely dependent on oil for cultivation and for pumping water (40 percent of our food comes from irrigation) and on natural gas for fertilizers.

More local production and home gardens is a partial solution there. In the interval the food industry will have to pay whatever the cost of oil is, passed on to us in higher prices. Food inflation, in other words.

The other is transport. Oil makes our world go 'round. That's one reason the USA has invaded the Middle East, as its economy, more than any other, is based on the availability of cheap oil. Already an oil substitute, natural gas, is facing a supply squeeze, where, thanks to 'Free Trade' Canada's rapidly depleting reserves are bound to go south. Again more inflation.

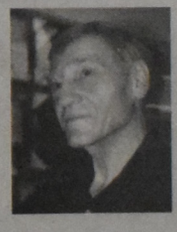
Which country has the deepest pockets to pay for a vastly more expensive standard of living? Japan? It has high saving rates, a large trade surplus, but also large government deficits, a poor banking system and all energy is imported.

China? It too has a high saving rate, large dollar reserves, but also a poor banking system and is no longer energy self-sufficient.

Europe? It uses half the energy per person compared to North America, but also has huge government deficits offset by large dollar reserves and an extensive mass transit infrastructure and access to lots of natural gas.

The USA? It has high debts, personal, national and international, high trade and budget deficits, high per capita energy use, no mass transit and most of its energy needs are imported.

My bet is on Europe.



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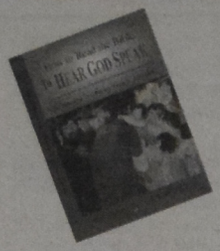

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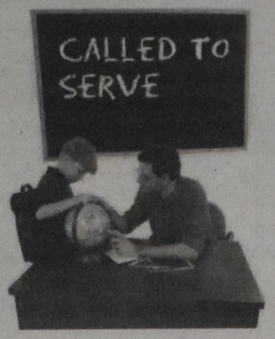

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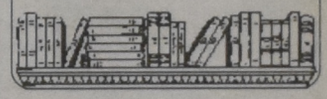

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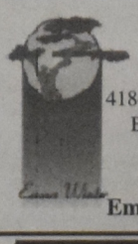

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Christian Courier is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 9 a.m. Tuesday, 13 days prior to publication date.

RATES (GST added to all rates listed)
All personal and family announcements: $16.00 per column inch (P.I.) (2 " wide)
rose@christiancourier.ca
Display advertising re. businesses and organizations: $18.20 P.I.
ads@christiancourier.ca

PHOTOS
There is a processing fee of $25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement. Photo space is not charged P.I., but we reserve the right to determine published photo size. Please note that we cannot use a faxed photo. We need either an original photo (which we will return) or a downloadable internet image.

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NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS
We offer a $25 one-year subscription to couples whose wedding is announced in Christian Courier and to parents who announce a child's birth in our paper. If you want to take advantage of this offer, please let us know when placing your ad.

SUBMITTING YOUR AD
Mail: Christian Courier
1 Hiscott St.
St. Catharines, ON L2R 1C7
fax: 905-682-8313 e-mail: see above

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a) *Christian Courier* reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format and editing style.
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or email
huizengaa@planet.nl

Met vriendelijke groeten

Anniversaries

March 12, 2004

Praise and thanksgiving to our gracious Lord and Heavenly Father for his rich blessings and the touch of his loving hand – on the lives of our parents

HANK AND CONNIE (Kloostra) VAN ROOYEN

on the blessed occasion of their **50th Wedding Anniversary** March 12, 2004.

Thank you Mom & Dad for your wonderful love and your enduring example. God bless you as you celebrate his faithfulness.

Your children:
Wally & Corrine Kloostra
Ellen & Jim Eisses
Martha & John Kralt
Hetty & Dan Flikweert
Liz & Dick Ormel
Joanne & Randy Linzel
Dirk & Tracy Van Rooyen
Ralph Van Rooyen
27 grandchildren
1 great-grandson

"Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say: Rejoice." Philip. 4:4

Winter Address: Sugar Creek C.C.
26th Ave E Lot 1207
Bradenton FL 34208

Kampen, 1954 March 16 2004, Exeter

Psalm 23

HARRY AND ANN KLUNGEL (nee Van Den Heuvel)

The Lord our Shepherd held us for **50 Years** in his care, and in his mercy blessed us with our family.

Al & Christie, *Calgary AB*
Chelsea, Troy, Rachel
Aileen & Fred Knip, *Exeter*
David, Michael, Nicholas, Tyler
Peter, *Toronto*
Eloise, *Exeter*

Friends and family are invited to an **Open House** on *D.V.* March 20 from 2 - 4 in the Exeter Chr. Ref. Church, Huron St. W.
Best wishes only.

Home address: 505 Pinewood Ave
Exeter ON N0M 1S1

1954 March 12 2004

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" Philippians 4:4

SIMON AND DINA DREISE

with their children, grandchildren and great-grandchild hope to celebrate their **50th Wedding Anniversary**

Congratulations from your children:

John Dreise	*Chatham, ON*
Kasper & Martha Reinink	*Ottawa, ON*
Dick & Clara Dreise	*Chatham, ON*
Anita Dreise	*London, ON*
Don & Yvonne Dreise	*Chatham, ON*
Henry & Evelyn Dreise	*Dorchester, ON*
Calvin & Anita Dreise	*Acton, ON*
Andrew & Janet Dreise	*Owen Sound, ON*
Simon & Kelly Dreise	*Kent Bridge, ON*
Albert & Julie Dreise	*Chatham, ON*

32 grandchildren and 1 great-grandchild

An **Open House** will be held at
Grace Christian Ref. Church Chatham, ON
after the 10 o'clock morning worship service on March 14, 2004.

Home address: 212 Valley Rd. Chatham ON N7L 5L2

1954 March 27 2004

With thankfulness to God, the children and grandchildren of

BEREND AND JOHANNA DE VRIES

are pleased to announce the celebration of their **50th Wedding Anniversary** with an **Open House** at Trinity Christian Reformed Church
1230 Old Martindale Road
St. Catharines, Ont.
Saturday, March 27, 2:00 – 4:00 PM
Best Wishes Only!

A heartfelt congratulations from their children and grandchildren:

Wilbur & Renee De Vries, *Edmonton*
Doug, Rob, Jeff and Andrew
Albert & Eveline De Vries, *Ottawa*
Jenny, Joyce and Brent
Syd & Shelli De Vries, *Newmarket*
Tara, Rachel and Lauren
Ben De Vries – *Heaven*

Home Address: RR#3 1795 Seventh St
St Catharines ON L2R 6P9

Obituaries

Aalten 1922 2004 Aalten

Suddenly the Lord called home our dear brother and uncle

BERNHARD NEERHOF

age 81

Mien Klyn Hesselink (Gerrit †), *Clinton,ON*
Francis Neerhof (Joe †),*Owen Sound,ON*
Arnold & Nel Neerhof, *Trenton,ON*
John & Audrey Neerhof, *Chatsworth,ON*
Gerrit Neerhof (Riek †), *Aalten,Holland*
Shena & Hank De Boer, *Chatham,ON*
Nieces & Nephews

We mourn, but not as those who have no hope, for "Jesus has said: I go and prepare a place for you." John 14:2b

---

Dedemovaart, March 12, 1917 January 13, 2004, Brampton, Ontario

"Jesus Christ died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live together with him." 1 Thessalonians 5:10

MATTHYS MAAS

entered into glory, with his family by his side.
We will miss his smile and great sense of humor. His passion for church and people was very evident throughout his life. Praise be to God!

Survived by his loving wife of 61 years
Neely Maas (van den Berg)

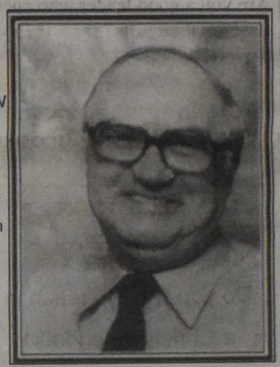
Loving children:
Evelyn & Ed Eggengoor, *Orillia,ON*
Mary & Bill Knight, *Jordan Station,ON*
Gary & Mary Maas, *Brampton,ON*
(Bruce †2001) Ada Maas, *Brampton,ON*
Tex & Dorothy Maas, *Rexdale,ON*
John & Alice Maas, *Brantford ON*
Arend & Louise Maas, *Brampton,ON*

Survived by sisters Jo Otter, *Oshawa,ON*
Alberdien & Gerrie, *Holland*

Fondly remembered by 29 grandchildren and 33 great-grandchildren

Memorial Service was held at Holland Christian Homes, Pastor Herman Praamsma officiating.

Correspondence: Mrs. N. Maas
HT 408 – 7900 McLaughlin Rd S
Brampton ON L6Y 5A7



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Job Opportunities

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is accepting applications for a part time Worship Director. For a full description of the position contact: **Gateway Community Church**
Ph/fax **(604)859-590**
E-mail: **gatewaycommunity@uniserve.com** or visit our website at: www.gatewaycrc.org
Address resume to:
The Search Team for Worship Director
Gateway Community Church,
Box 485
Abbotsford BC V2S 5Z5

On Friday, **April 30th 2004** from 6:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m.

the **FIRST ROYAL DUTCH TREAT** will take place at the Liberty Grand, Exhibition Place in **Toronto**, Ontario.

More information to follow in March 16 issue or visit website: **www.royaldutchtreat.ca**

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ESSEX CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH is searching for an individual with sincere faith and strong musical gifts to provide inspirational **musical leadership** for our worship services. This individual is to act as the primary musician to lead with organ and/or piano in contemporary and traditional worship. The successful candidate will coordinate the music ministry and encourage the development of the musical gifts already present in our congregation.

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276 Talbot St. S.
Essex ON N8M 1B8

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Sarnia ON N7T-7H3
Ph: 519-337-4660 or email:
artc@rivernet.net

BETHLEHEM CRC, THUNDER BAY, ONTARIO, is a caring community of believers whose vision is "Embracing God to Touch Your Life." It is our desire as a church to share God's love with a broken and hurting world. We seek a **FULL-TIME PASTOR** to join our 240 member congregation. For further information, or to obtain a copy of our church profile, please contact committee chair
Mrs. Raili Paulusma E-mail:
paulusme@tbaytel.net
or by telephone 807-768-8771
or check our web-site at
www.baynet.net/~bethcrc/

OTTAWA SEEKS MINISTER
CALVARY CRC OF OTTAWA-EAST
is looking for a **Pastor.**
Our church is located about 10 min. from Parliament Hill. We are a mix of rural and urban families, with a total of 424 members. Do your preaching and one-on-one interactions with people challenge them to grow spiritually, preparing them for outreach and a godly life? Are you a caring, pastoral person who visits the sick and others in need, and deals well with crisis situations? Are you effective in working with young people? Are you a good leader who encourages others to develop their gifts? If so, then you may be exactly the person we need as our new Pastor. For a complete church profile or any other inquiries, please contact
John Cook (phone: (613)745-5914;
e-mail: johngcook@sprint.ca)

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CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
is seeking a **full time pastor** to serve a church with approximately 150 members.
We are a congregation seeking a pastor who is a confident, respected leader. He must have good people skills and be able to open the Word of God in a competent manner in the worship services.
For more information or to obtain a copy of our church profile please contact
Ernie Whitrow @ **403-528-9794**
or email **speed2@telus.net**.
Forward resume to
Box 871, Medicine Hat AB T1A 7G8

Help shape God's young people, and help shape the future of Christian secondary education in Simcoe County!
In its inaugural year,
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Send applications to the principal,
Peter Bulthuis: pbulthuis@unitychristianhigh.ca
Box 31001, Molson Park Postal Outlet
Barrie ON L4N 0B3
Please check the Career page in our website:
www.unitychristianhigh.ca

Houston Christian School
invites applications for a possible position in the **primary Gr. 2-3** class for September 2004. We anticipate 134 students in Gr. K-12 for the next school year, 18 in Gr. 2-3 and 12 in Gr. K-1.
Houston is a forestry-based community of about 4500 people. Our students come from mainly four local churches: Baptist, Canadian Reformed, Christian Reformed, and Pentecostal.
Please call, fax, or e-mail:
Jack VandenBorn, Principal
Phone: 250-845-7736 (school)
250-845-3778 (home)
Fax: 250-845-7738
E-mail: hcschool@telus.net

Teachers
Do you want to teach in a Christian school in Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick or PEI?
Check out positions with the ***Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools*** at www.oacs.org. Updated daily
OACS
www.oacs.org

MARANATHA CHRISTIAN ACADEMY
Is an interdenominational K-12 school in Windsor, Ontario with a diverse church base.
We are inviting applications from computer literate teachers with a vibrant Christian walk who wish to honour the Lord in the classroom.
- The **grade 2 homeroom position** will be rewarding to a creative individual with a demonstrable interest in primary education.
- The **grade 5 homeroom position** is best suited to an enthusiastic teacher with an interest in team coaching.
- The **secondary position** will attract an individual looking for full-time or part-time in Mathematics, Technology, Social Science, Canadian World Studies.

Suitably qualified teachers should send applications and appropriate documentation supporting your interest to:
William Van Dyke, Principal
Maranatha Christian Academy
939 Northwood St., Windsor, ON N9E 2B4
Ph: 519-966-7424 Fax: 519-966-9519
Email: principal@maranathachristian.ca
Website: www.maranathachristian.ca

London Parental Christian School
invites applications for a **part time music position**
for the 2004-2005 school year
The music teacher will teach Grades 1 through 5 and carry out the Grades 6-8 Band program. This position could possibly be combined with a part time Grade 3 position.
Please send a statement of faith and a resumé to:
Mary Haven, Principal
London Parental Christian School
202 Clarke Road
London ON N5W 5E4

Toronto District Christian High School
Teachers needed for:
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Send resume and references to
principal@tdchristian.ca or to
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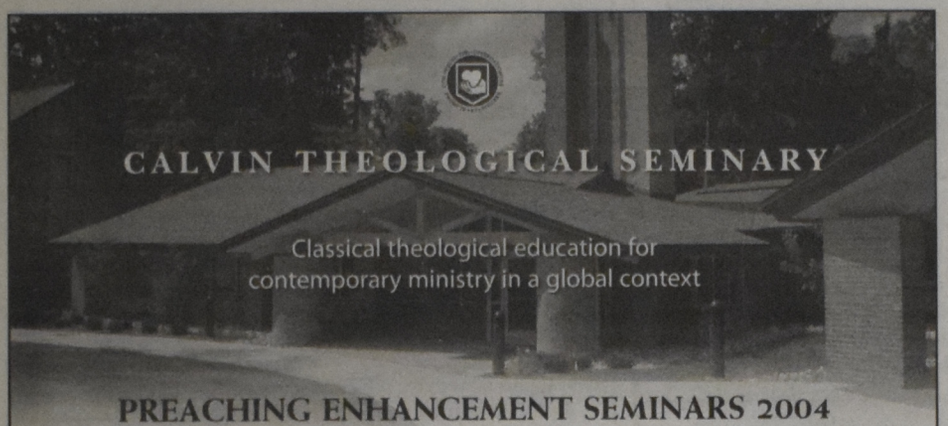
For more information please check the jobs page on our web site www.tdchristian.ca.

SEVERAL TEACHING POSITIONS AVAILABLE
TRENTON CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
invites applications from qualified teachers in our Junior and Intermediate grades, effective September 2004. Strength in Music or Phys. Ed.,or French will be an asset. Applicants must be in full agreement with the TCS Constitution and commit to uphold and promote the same. Please send letter of application, resumes, etc. to:
340 Second Dug Hill Rd., RR #4, Trenton, K8V 5P7
Before April 8, 2004

See our website www.christiancourier.ca for job opportunities advertised in recent issues of the Christian Courier

To subscribe to the Christian Courier, please call our toll-free number: 1-800-969-4838. Not sure? We will be happy to send you 3 complimentary copies.

Advertising / Events



PREACHING ENHANCEMENT SEMINARS 2004

A Pilot Program at Calvin Theological Seminary

As part of an encouraging new initiative in the area of preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary, we invite you to join one of three small groups of pastors for the summer and fall of 2004 to work together at skills and resources for effective preaching. In a design geared to deepen long-term preaching habits, the groups will gather twice:

- The first meeting consists of four-five days of reading, discussion, fellowship, worship and prayer about a particular aspect of preaching.
- The second meeting, three months later, consists of studying sermons arising out of seminar discussions and preached by seminar participants in their congregations.

2004 Seminar Groups

July 6-10, 2004, and October 4-6, 2004, Denver, Colorado

"Preaching and Intergenerational Pastoral Care," led by **Howard Vanderwell**, Resource Development Specialist for Pastoral Leadership, Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. This seminar is offered in conjunction with a Conference on Liturgy and Music (COLAM) entitled "The Church Together: Exploring Intergenerational Worship," featuring leaders such as Sally Morgenthaler, Gil Rendle, John Rottman, Keith Tanis, Moses Chung, and Ron Nydam, and sessions on preaching and related topics.

July 12-16, 2004, and October 11-13, 2004, Grand Rapids, Michigan

"Engaging with Science on Sunday," led by **Scott Hoezee**, Pastor of Calvin Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan, author of *Proclaim the Wonder: Engaging Science on Sunday* (Baker Book House, 2003).

July 19-23, 2004, and October 18-20, 2004, Palos Heights, Illinois

"Effective Communication in Preaching," led by **Duane Kelderman**, Vice President for Administration and Professor of Preaching, Calvin Theological Seminary, **Sam Hamstra**, Pastor of Palos Heights Christian Reformed Church and **Annalee Ward**, Professor of Communication Arts, Trinity Christian College.

Initial application deadline is April 1, 2004.
For further details, application materials, and information about financial aid, visit *www.calvin.edu/worship/*.

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May 15
dinner at 5:30 p.m.
(reservation needed)
7 p.m. program at
Sarnia Christian School
May 16:
Celebratory Anniversary Worship Service
Contact
firstcrc@xcelco.on.ca for more information, or call
519-336-8808

HEBRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
4240 Anderson St. Whitby, ON
50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS
Saturday April 24
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Banquet – 5:30 pm
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April 18 & 25 10 am
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC. In case of free listing, space limitations apply. The charge otherwise is $7.50 per line, or $1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion

Feb. 29 A dutch service will be held in the **Ancaster** Chr. Ref. Church at 3 pm, Rev. M. Koops preaching.

Mar 26,27 The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "De Avond van de zevende Juli" 2 pm & 8 pm at **Woodstock** Market Centre Theatre. Phone 519-283-6285 or 519-539-8940 for more info.

Apr 3 The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "De Avond van de zevende Juli" 2 pm at Evergreen Senior Centre, **Guelph**. Phone 519-283-6285 or 519-539-8940 for more info.

Apr. 10 **Annual Festival of Praise** by the **Christian Male Chorus** Association of Southwestern Ontario. 7:30 p.m. Centennial Hall, 550 Wellington St. **London**. Five choirs with over 200 men participating. Tickets: $13 (519)451-5484 or email: jettrick@sympatico.ca For information: (519)637-4357.

Apr.18, 24, 25 **Hebron CRC**, **Whitby,** Ontario, 50th anniversary celebrations. See ad next issue or phone 1-905-655-5020 or website www.hebroncrc.ca for more info.

Apr 24 The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "De Avond van de zevende Juli" 8 pm at the **Jordan**, Christian Heritage School. Phone 519-283-6285 or 519-539-8940 for more info.

Apr. 24 The MEN OF PRAISE (from Woodstock) in concert, at the Ebenezer CRC, **Jarvis** Ont., at 7:30 pm. Freewill offering.

Apr 30 The **First Royal Dutch Treat** will take place at the Liberty Grand, Exhibition Place in **Toronto**, Ontario. See March 16 issue for more information or see www.royaldutchtreat.ca

May 2 **Concert of Sacred Music** by **St. Thomas Cresendo Male Choir** 7:30 pm Knox Presbyterian Church 55 Hincks St, **St. Thomas.** Freewill offering for Canadian Bible Society. (519)637-4357

May 2 Guelph Spring Festival presents duo organists **Jan Overduin & Jonathan Oldengarm** in concert at 3:00 pm. A pre-concert chat will be held at 2:30 pm. Both events at St. George's Anglican Church, 99 Woolwich Street, **Guelph, ON**. For tickets and information, call the River Run Centre Box Office at 519-763-3000 or 1-877-520-2408, or visit www.guelphspringfestival.org

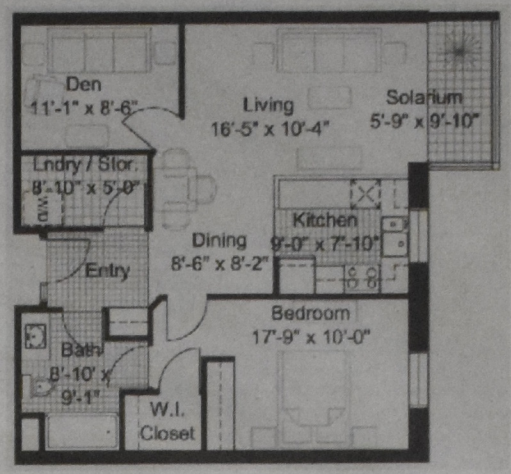
May 7 Calgary Society of Organists presents **Jonathan Oldengarm** in concert, 8:00 pm., at Grace Presbyterian Church, **Calgary, AB**. For information call 403-249-0764. Single tickets are $15 and single student/senior tickets are $10.

May 15,16 **Sarnia** First Christian Reformed Church, 70th Anniversary. Contact firstcrc@xcelco.on.ca for more information, or call 519-336-8808. See ad this issue.

May 18 National organ competition winner **Jonathan Oldengarm** plays monumental works of the French romantics on the great Casavant organ at St. Mary's Basilica, Spring Garden Road at Barrington Street, **Halifax, NS**. **8:00 pm.** For tickets and information, call the St. Cecilia Concert Series Box Office at 902-420-4085, or visit www.stcecilia.ca.

May 29 First Christian Reformed Church of **Montreal** will celebrate its **50th anniversary**. Ph: 1-514-684-4430 or E-mail: georgelucy@aei.ca See ad this issue

Thinking Condo? Thinking Apt?
Think Again!



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–Psalm 90:1

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TICO Registration #4499356

First Christian Reformed Church of Montreal

will celebrate its **50th anniversary**
D.V. **May 29th, 2004**
and cordially invites all former members and pastors.
R.S.V.P. before Apr. 30th.
Photo's & images of past and present would be appreciated.
Phone **1-514-684-4430** [7-10 p.m. EST]
E-mail: **georgelucy@aei.ca**

Barbara Carvill: welcoming the stranger

Phil de Haan

Beginning at age 10, when she and her family fled East Germany, Barbara Carvill has often felt like the new person in a strange place. But at most stops along the way she was made to feel welcome and she's never forgotten what that was like.

Barbara Carvill

So it's perhaps no surprise that her teaching career at Calvin College has been marked by a passion to create community in her classrooms, to make all of her students feel welcome.

And now that passion has earned her Calvin's highest faculty honor – the Presidential Award for Exemplary Teaching. The award includes a one-of-a-kind medallion and provides the winner with a significant financial stipend thanks to the George B. and Margaret K. Tinholt Endowment Fund, set up at Calvin by an anonymous donor in honor of George Tinholt, a former member of the Calvin Board of Trustees.

Carvill says her teaching philosophy is tied pretty closely to the arc of her life, a story that had its first upheaval in 1950 when, as a young girl, she fled the Communist-controlled eastern part of Germany for the U.S.-controlled west. It was there Carvill had the one experience in her life where she, as a newcomer, was not made to feel welcome.

"They (the Germans in the west) had very little," Carvill recalls, "and disliked all the refugees from the East. We definitely did not feel welcomed there. I remember feeling very estranged and forlorn."

Welcoming a stranger

Carvill contrasts that experience with the welcome she felt when she came to Calvin in 1978 as a recent widow and mother of a four-year-old daughter.

Carvill had been teaching at Toronto District Christian High School and working on a Ph.D. at the University of Toronto, while also involved with her husband, Robert, in a myriad of activities at the Institute for Christian Studies. When their daughter was born in 1973, she was baptized in a Christian Reformed Church and the Carvill family joined the CRC. That chain of events led to an offer to come to Calvin.

"I was invited by Calvin to apply for a job in the German department," she says, "because they wanted a native German speaker and preferably a person from the CRC."

Carvill begins to smile as she continues.

"We had joined the CRC, and I was a native speaker – so I was probably the only person on the whole continent with these qualifications," she says with a chuckle.

Regardless of the circumstances, the move from Toronto to Grand Rapids proved a good fit for both Calvin and Carvill, especially after the death of Robert from leukemia in 1975.

"I was well received here," she says. "People took me in right from the beginning. I never felt an outsider here. I came to a good department with wonderful talented and appreciative colleagues. I was truly welcomed as a stranger."

The gift of the stranger

Almost a quarter of a century later, Carvill and colleague David Smith would write a groundbreaking book on foreign language instruction called *The Gift of the Stranger: Faith, Hospitality, and Foreign Language Learning.*

Coincidence? Carvill says no.

"Having been welcomed into this community," she says, "I wanted to give something back, to show how important the virtue of hospitality is in life."

In the book, Smith and Carvill propose that foreign language education prepare students for two related callings: to be a blessing as strangers in a foreign land, and to be hospitable strangers in their own homeland.

Nothing there, says Carvill with another smile, about verb tenses and endings.

And then she elaborates.

"In the last 20 years," she says, "a lot has changed in our field (foreign language instruction). The stress is not so much on the mastery of grammar, but on understanding culture in its different dimensions and to develop intercultural competency."

Carvill thinks that's a good thing. But what she didn't like about the shift was the content of the culture in most foreign language textbooks. These books, she says, are covering politically correct issues in an often boring and quite sanitized fashion.

"Since these are secular textbooks," she says, "they ignore for instance the religious dimension of human life."

Carvill wants more for her students. She wants what she calls "the real stuff of life."

And so she likes to lead her students to a deeper understanding of human life and of faith. She looks for language materials which are potentially life-changing and life-giving. Bringing students to those "aha moments," she is convinced, is what makes studying a foreign language worthwhile, for both student and teacher.

Encounter with Reformed thinking

This thinking, she says, comes from her engagement with Reformed thought, an engagement she credits to her husband. Barbara and Robert met at Northwestern University in Illinois in the late 1960s where Barbara was a teaching assistant on a Fulbright Scholarship. Robert, a native of Maine, had done his undergraduate work at Gordon College in Massachusetts and had become captivated by the Reformed tradition. Soon, Barbara too became attracted to this intellectual Christian tradition which she did not find in American evangelicalism at that time.

In 1969, the pair married and moved to Toronto to work and learn more about the Reformed world and life view as practiced at the Institute for Christian Studies.

"There, at the ICS," Barbara recalls, "I became convinced that we had to rethink the whole foreign language enterprise from a Christian perspective."

At Calvin, however, she soon began to realize that she couldn't solve this task just theoretically. But, she says, over time the spiritual and intellectual climate of Calvin, particularly of the German department with two masterful teachers, clarified to her more and more what teaching foreign languages from a Christian perspective should look like.

The Gift of the Stranger, she says, is an embodiment of almost 25 years of teaching at Calvin, a small flowering of the seeds that were planted in the early 1970s at the ICS and nurtured during a quarter century of practice at Calvin.

In the book, and in her teaching, she calls on people to practice two kinds of foreign language hospitality. The first is to be a blessing as strangers in other lands – not just to be polite although, says Carvill, that's important too – but to ask good informed questions which can be a gift to one's foreign host. The second is to develop the Christian virtue of hospitality towards the foreign culture and its people.

Speaking in tongues

Jim Lamse, a former colleague of Carvill's, recalls a vivid demonstration of Carvill's commitment to this ideal.

Carvill had been asked to speak at the closing banquet in Chengdu as part of a summer workshop for Chinese English teachers sponsored by the English Language Institute China (ELIC). She first wrote out her speech in English, but with great deference to the Chinese style of speechmaking, which she had taken the time to study. But when it was her turn to speak, the audience was astounded to hear her present her thoughts in their language. She had the speech translated and recorded for her in Mandarin Chinese so that she could memorize it with the correct pronunciation.

Says Lamse: "It was a speech and an evening those in attendance would never forget. She honored their traditions and took the trouble to learn their language. But that's Barbara, at home or abroad, living out lovingly and with delight the hospitable message of Scripture and the loving ethos of our department."

Christian teacher deprived of freedom of speech in BC

The BC courts are becoming Canada's version of California. On Feb. 4 the Court upheld the right of the BC College of Teachers to suspend Chris Kempling, a Christian high school teacher and student counselor in the public school, for one month, without pay for writing letters to the editor condemning homosexual activity as unbiblical. The College of Teachers oversees the accreditation of teachers for the province.

According to LifesiteNews.com, among other things, Kempling wrote, "Homosexuality is not something to be applauded." He also wrote, "I refuse to be a false teacher saying that promiscuity is acceptable, perversion is normal, and immorality is simply 'cultural diversity' of which we should be proud."

"I have 14 letters of commendation, and no complaints against me," Kempling pointed out. "My supervisors, knowing my beliefs, have assigned me to help gay students, even a transsexual. I treat all my students with respect." He forwarded supportive letters and other evidence to the BCCT and offered to stop his writing, but to no avail.

Kempling was never accused of bringing his opinions into the classroom.

In his statement, Justice Ronald Holmes of the Supreme Court said that Kempling's editorial comments were "discriminatory," and "could reasonably cause disruption to the school system."

In his response to the ruling Kempling said, "It is a black day for religious freedom in Canada. It means that teachers who happen to be Christians or who belong to other religions proscribing homosexuality may not comment publicly on this issue."

Kempling expressed his intention to appeal the ruling to the BC Court of Appeal if he can get financial help.

A trust fund has been set up. It is the "Christian Public School Teachers' Legal Defense Fund." Money contributed to this fund will help Christopher Kempling with the expenses of his legal defence. Subsequently, money in the fund after Chris's defence can be used to help other Christian teachers who may find themselves in a similar position.

If you would like to contribute to the trust fund, you may make a contribution at any Royal Bank branch. The transit number is 4720. The account number is 101-030-5.

If you prefer to contribute by cheque, send your contribution to: Christian Public School Teachers' Legal Defense Fund c/o Jim Sagert, 798 Beaubien Ave, Quesnel BC V2J 1S5